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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WIVES' REACTION TO DISCLOSURE OF THEIR HUSBANDS' HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTAITON AND/OR ACTIVITY

BY

ADELINE G. FREDLUND

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING, 1989

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled, WIVES' REACTION TO DISCLOSURE OF THEIR HUSBANDS' HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION AND/OR ACTIVITY submitted by Adeline G. Fredlund in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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Date: April 24 1989

DEDICATION

In memory of my mother, Mary Shewchuk, who passed away prior to the completion of this research. Her fight with cancer provided an example for me of how to live life to the fullest, no matter what life's circumstances.

Abstract

Past research on wives' reactions to their husbands' disclosure of homosexual activity has focused on the homosexual or bisexual male, with the wives as a subset of the study (Bozett, 1982; Brownfain, 1985; Coleman, 1985). One recent study (Gochros, 1985) addressed the reactions of the wives directly. That study was used as a guide for this research. Qualitative research methods were utilized using a semi-structured interview schedule. For this study the research question was, "What is the experience like for wives when they discover their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity?" In this study, ten wives were interviewed in order to explore how they reacted to the disclosure, what they thought, felt, and did in response, and what resources--personal, family and community, they utilized to cope with the disclosure. Wives were found to progress through stages of denial, accommodation, self-awareness, acceptance, and then detachment from the issues of being married to a homosexual spouse. They then focused their energies on building themselves and their careers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Carrie Kleiber's hours spent in transcribing the audio tapes are very much appreciated. Thanks to all of my friendly editors for their hours spent examining the manuscript--Jean Dean, Dianne Gretzinger and Linda Trask.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The North American nuclear family is based on the assumption of a monogamous relationship (Robertson, 1981). However, the social climate of the Vietmam war, the sexual revolution, and the women's liberation movement have slowly changed mores to a more liberal viewpoint (Elbaum, 1981).

With the relaxing of mores, the incidence of extramarital relationships (EMR) has not only increased in the past decade (Thompson, 1983), but studies indicate that heterosexual permissiveness apparently has been on the rise since the 1960s (Saunders & Edwards, 1984). Also, Humphreys' study (1969) clearly indicated a higher frequency of homosexual EMR'S among married men than was previously thought.

Bozett (1981) conducted a study on gay fathers. Bozett (1981) estimated that the married or formerly married homosexual male population in the United States was one million. The estimated population of wives of homosexual males would be identical.

Until the last decade, researchers studying homosexuals and/or bisexuals have concentrated on the

homosexuals and/or bisexual spouse and his psychological adjustment (Zinik, 1985). More recent studies have examined couple issues such as marital satisfaction (Brownfain, 1985; Coleman, 1985; Dixon, 1985; Matteson, 1985). However, the focus of the research has been on the bisexual spouse.

Male bisexuals have stated that they encountered difficulties with disclosure of their homosexual orientation and/or activity to their wives (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Brownfain, 1985). Before a man can tell his wife, he must know himself as a sexual being and be sure of his sexual orientation (Brownfain, 1985). The "coming out" process for the married homosexual is complicated by his guarding of his secret from the one to whom he is most intimately bound--his wife (Brownfain, 1985).

Miller (1979) stated that gayness is incompatible with traditional marriages and that wives are upset by their husbands' revelation (or "coming out"). In the book, *Identity and Community in the Gay World*, Warren (1974) discussed gays and their relationships with their families. Often parents become aware of their child's gay orientation when the gay person is forced "out of the closet" by lovers or spouses. Warren

(1974) stated that often angry former wives or male lovers were a dependable source of information for family and friends.

Bozett (1982) studied homosexual married men and reported that the disclosure to the wives usually resulted in divorce. He suggested the reason for divorce was that gay men cannot achieve full life satisfaction within the framework of a heterosexual marriage. Again, Bozett (1982) studied homosexual married men and not their wives. Thus, while the husband's reason for leaving the relationship may have been that he could not achieve full life satisfaction within the framework of a heterosexual marriage, the reason for the woman leaving the relationship may have been different.

Some authors who have written about homosexuality have noted that the massive literature on how to "normalize" (alter his homosexual desires to heterosexual desires) the (male) homosexual has not addressed the spouse's adjustment to his homosexuality (Tripp, 1975). The disclosure has been described as a "tragedy" for the wife (Nahas & Turley, 1979). Previously, homosexual male client's were advised by therapists to marry as a "cure" for their homosexual

tendencies without concern for the consequences of such a union for the wife (Nahas & Turley, 1979).

Gochros (1985) conducted an interview study with wives of bisexual men and indeed found that the disclosure was problematic for the wives. In that study, almost all of the women reported a sense of isolation and all women reported undergoing an identity and integrity crisis. Unlike previous research by Hatterer (1974) which described these women as neurotic, Gochros study indicated a profile of an assertive, well-adjusted woman. These discrepancies indicate that further investigation is necessary.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this research was to use a naturalistic approach to describe how wives react to the disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. The research question was: What is the response of wives to the disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity? This study was important in that wives of homosexuals represent a subset of the population on which little research has been conducted.

The disclosure must have occurred post-marriage. Wives who go into the marriage with full knowledge of

their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity appear to face fewer problems (Nahas & Turley, 1979). Bozett (1982) reported that pre-marriage disclosure generally resulted in positive sanctioning from the fiancee.

Objective of This Study

The objective of the thesis was derived out of the purpose and question: to determine behavioral, cognitive, and psychological responses of a wife after she acquires the knowledge of her husband's homosexual orientation and/or activity, this knowledge being acquired post-marriage.

Two other sub-questions will be asked in this study: 1.) Did wives feel any stigma?, 2.) How do wives of homosexuals react to the issue of AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). The rationale for discussing these two sub-questions will be more fully explained in the literature review.

The literature review will discuss past research on wives of homosexuals and bisexuals. Then, the methods employed for data collection and analysis will be presented. After presentation of the findings, a comparison between Gocrhos findings and the findings of

this study will be discussed. Conclusions and directions for further research will be given.

Definition of Terms

In order to avoid ambiguity, two key terms shall be defined according to how their meanings are applied in this study. These two terms are defined as they are used for the purpose of this research are "disclosure" and "homosexual".

Disclosure.

In this study, reactions of wives are studied--those reactions being post-disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. The dictionary definition (Funk & Wagnalls, 1980) of disclose is: to expose to view; uncover or to make known. Disclosure is defined further as the act or process of disclosing. An act is defined as something done, a deed, an action, while a process is a series of continuous actions that bring about a particular result, an end or a condition. As there is so little research, it is difficult to determine whether disclosure for these wives is an act or a process. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, disclosure can be either an act, an event or the process of a

series of events that brings about the exposure or awareness of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity.

Homosexual.

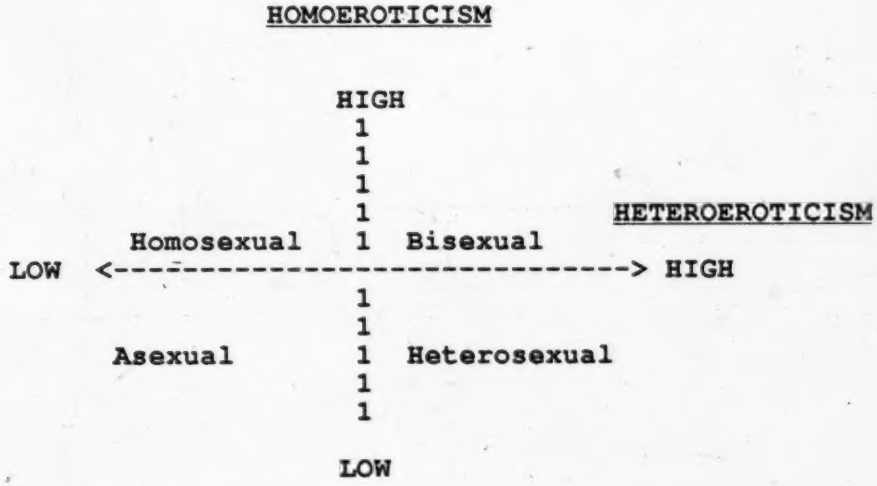
Many past studies have used the terms bisexual and homosexual interchangeably without clearly defining whether the term refers to sexual activity, personal label (i.e., a person identifying him or herself as homosexual or bisexual), or erotic preference. Both Kinsey (1948) and Storms (1980) have developed a definition of both.

Kinsey (1948) challenged the dichotomous view of sexuality--heterosexual vs. homosexual. He designed a seven point continuum of sexual behavior where 0 was exclusive heterosexual intercourse experience and 6 was exclusive homosexual intercourse experience with graduating degrees of both forms of sexual experience in between (Figure 1). Kinsey (1948) suggested that the terms not be applied so much to individuals as labels but as descriptors of his or her sex acts or sexual experience. By Kinsey's definition an individual's sexual behavior would be described by

Figure 1. Kinsey's Continuum of Sexuality.

0 - Exclusive heterosexual
1 - Mostly heterosexual with incidental homosexual experience
2 - Heterosexual with substantial homosexual experience
3 - Equal heterosexual and homosexual experience
4 - Homosexual with substantial heterosexual experience
5 - Homosexual with incidental heterosexual experience
6 - Exclusive homosexual

Figure 2. Storms' Two-dimensional Scale of Sexuality.



their degree of sexual activity with opposite or same-sex people.

Thus, a homosexual would be described as anyone at 4, 5, or 6 along the continuum but with varying degrees of heterosexual activity. As well, a heterosexual would be anyone at 0, 1, and 2 along the continuum but with varying degrees of homosexual activity. Someone at 3 would be someone who engaged in equal heterosexual and homosexual activity. In essence, homosexual was a descriptor for a particular type of intercourse--not erotic preference. The term bisexual was not part of Kinsey's continuum.

Storms (1980) designed a two-dimensional scheme for defining sexuality which included bisexuality. However, Storms basis for the sexual definition was not experience or behavior, but the extent of sexual arousal to members of the opposite or same gender.

In this model, there are two scales--one to measure the degree of heteroeroticism and the other to measure the degree of homoeroticism (Figure 2). If a person measured high on homoeroticism and low on heteroeroticism, they would be classified as homosexual. A bisexual would be someone who measured high on both homoeroticism and heteroeroticism, and a

heterosexual would be someone who measured high on heteroeroticism and low on homoeroticism. A person who measured low on both sexual scales would be classified as asexual.

In the present study, the husbands have engaged in homosexual activity as well as heterosexual activity. They are presumed to be bisexual, at least to some extent. However, the husbands' erotic preference was not studied and marriage does not preclude exclusive homosexual erotic preference.

It was difficult to determine which term to apply to the husbands' activity. Kinsey's terms did not include bisexual, but addresssed the person who engaged in homosexual and heterosexual activity. Storms' terms used the term bisexual but addressed erotic preference. As the husbands were not interviewed in this study, their sexual erotic preference could not be determined. What was known was their sexual activity. Therefore, the husbands' orientation and/or activity was referred to as homosexual with the realization that their erotic preference may have been either bisexual or homosexual.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Background

The Stonewall Incident of 1969 set the stage for gays to become more aware of their rights. On June 29, 1969 (Silverstein, 1977), at the Stonewall Bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village for the first time gays rioted in protest of the police raids. Gays indicated that they were no longer going to tolerate harassment by the police and began demanding their rights. The slogan which emerged from that incident was "out of the closets and into the streets" (Silverstein, 1977). That event was the impetus for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States.

Canadian gays were obtaining their rights as well. In 1968, the law prohibiting homosexual activity between consenting adults was revoked in Canada. However, the Charter of Rights still did not include sexual orientation as a category in which Canadians could be protected against discrimination. But in 1976, Quebec was the first province in Canada to pass legislation which prohibited discrimination against individuals for reasons of sexual orientation along with sex, race, creed, age, etc..

These public pressures for homosexual rights from the gay community in the late sixties and early seventies prompted the deletion of homosexuality as a mental disorder from the DSM-II (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) in 1972 (Korchin, 1976). After that, homosexual behavior was diagnosed as dysfunctional only when the individual experienced a sustained pattern of homosexual arousal which he or she felt was a source of distress (Krech, Crutchfield, Livson, Wilson, & Parducci, 1982).

With the deletion of homosexuality as a mental illness, homosexuals were acknowledged as potentially normal stable human beings. As a result, homosexuals began "coming out of the closet" and making their sexual orientation public knowledge (Coleman, 1985).

The results of Humphreys' (1969) study on the tearooms of San Francisco revealed a high population of married men engaging in homosexual activity. Further research was conducted on married homosexuals to determine if a homosexual can remain in a marriage and still have a positive sexual identity (Bozett, 1982). More recently, the issue has shifted from homosexual identities to bisexual identities--those men who engage in sexual acts with both males and females.

After Humphreys' (1969) research created the awareness of the extent of the homosexual and especially the *married* homosexual population, researchers delved more intensely into the area of homosexual and bisexual issues. Most often their research focused on the homosexual or bisexual male spouse. However, some of the researchers in the 1970's looked at the wives' reactions. One was Hatterer (1974) and another was Miller (1979).

Wives of Homosexuals

Hatterer (1974) looked at the problems of women married to homosexual men. Her sample consisted of 17 women. She characterized these wives as women who resisted change in their spouses in an attempt to preserve marital homeostasis for neurotic reasons.

Miller (1979) studied married homosexuals who were fathers and specifically looked at the father-child relationship. The sample consisted of 40 homosexual fathers, 14 of their children and 12 wives/mothers. Here, the wives were studied as a subset of the research conducted on bisexual men and were, for the most part, represented by the bisexual men. Miller stated that wives tended to be less accepting of the

husbands' homosexuality than were their children. He explained this difference as being due to the:

> varying commitment each has had in the homosexual denial system...wives...tend to deny numerous clues...Consequently, when this elaborate denial facade is exposed, the wife's confrontation with her own self-deception as well as her husband's deceit is frequently devastating.

Wives' reactions to the disclosure is influenced by their own self-deception. Miller appeared to suggest that wives consciously deny the clues and deceive themselves.

Couple-Relationship Issues

Some of the research (Bozett, 1982; Brownfain, 1985) focused on the adjustment of the couples' relationship after the disclosure of the husbands' homosexual activity. Eighteen gay men who were or had been married and also were fathers were interviewed by Bozett (1982). The focus of the research was on gay men and straight women and the marital adjustment. Bozett stated in the findings that wives who had had no disclosure prior to marriage were much less likely to accept their husbands' homosexual orientation. The research indicated that most

marriages would end in separation and divorce mainly because gay men cannot achieve full life satisfaction within the framework of a heterosexual marriage. Since none of the wives were interviewed, the wife's life satisfaction was not addressed.

Brownfain (1985) conducted research on 60 married men who engaged in heterosexual and homosexual acts. He found men who were self-labeled as bisexual were more content in their marriages and had more sexual intercourse with their wives. Marital adjustment was classified as okay by 36 of the 60 men. Only 8 of the women were aware of their husbands' homosexual activity. Brownfain stated that of those women "the working through process began with a mingling of shock, disbelief, anger, resentment, and rage, moving on to gradual understanding, and finally acceptance in varying degrees." However, the wives were never interviewed. These findings are from the bisexual husbands' perspective.

Male Bisexuals and Marriage

More recent research has focused on: the integration of a bisexual male in a marriage, whether a bisexual male can be married and still have a positive homosexual identity, and the couple relationship

(Coleman, 1985; Matteson, 1985; Wolf, 1985). Matteson researched the possibility of a bisexual male developing a positive homosexual identity and remaining in a marriage. Wolf researched couple relationship issues where the husband was bisexual. Both Matteson and Wolf have interviewed couples, but have focused on the bisexual male's perspective, not from the wife's perspective. However, Coleman (1985) did interview wives.

Integration of male bisexuality and marriage was the issue in Coleman's (1985) study. Eighteen husbands and fourteen wives were interviewed. While most of the findings discussed the bisexual males and couple adjustment, some findings on the wives were reported. The mean for years married was 18.09 years and the mean for time since disclosure had occurred was 5.22 years.

Coleman's findings on the wives were that they were more reluctant than their husbands to seek our support groups, perhaps due to not wanting to admit to their failure in their relationships with men or shame for being in the situation. Many of the wives were described as dependent and suffering from low self-esteem at the point of disclosure. Coleman states that a salient factor in a positive adjustment for the wives

was the development of self-esteem and comfort with independence and separateness.

Wives of Bisexuals

Gochros' study.

Compared to the relatively large body of research on married male bisexuals, the research conducted solely on the wives of these men has been minimal. Gochros (1985) conducted a qualitative and quantitative study of 33 wives of bisexuals with additional information gathered from 70 other women. Rather than using the wives as a subset of research on bisexual males, Gochros studied the wives themselves. Also, the wives' reaction to the disclosure was the focus of the research rather than couple relationship issues or the husbands' bisexual identity.

Interestingly, the results from Gochros' study did not support the previous claim that the wives were neurotics with poor heterosexual adjustment. "If any profile existed, it was of a highly educated, assertive, self-confident and socially skilled woman who had enjoyed a better-than-average marriage for many years. (Gochros, 1985, p. 112)."

Gochros' research questions.

Gochros' (1985) study provides the closest model for this study. The research questions for the Gochros study were: 1.) How did the wife react to the disclosure?, 2.) What were the consequences?, 3.) How did she try to cope with the situation?, 4.) What was the effect on her attitudes toward homosexuality?, and 5.) What problems did she face? What help did she seek and receive? These questions are significant in the present research. The findings for those issues will be presented.

Gochros' methods.

Gochros' snowball sample was obtained in the areas of Honolulu, Portland, San Francisco, and New York. Taped, semi-structured interviews were supplemented by a structured questionnaire, and four standardized validated scales measuring self-esteem (ISE), marital satisfaction (IMS), sexual satisfaction (ISS) and depression (GCS). Scale scores, interview responses, questionnaire responses, non-obtrusive data, and data from collateral interviews with husbands, friends, or therapists were compared. Content analysis was used for interview data (Gochros, 1985).

Gochros' findings.

Recovery from crisis involved the development of new resources and coping skills (Gochros, 1985). The new resources and coping skills were not discussed. Rather, crisis reactions were simply stated--dramatic loss of self-esteem, suicide attempts, direct violence associated with severe rejection and betrayal as perceived by the wives. This present study will probe for the development of new coping actions and new resources sought out and used by the wives.

The second question was: What help did the wife seek and receive? The discussion addressed this question in the section describing the positive and negative constellations surrounding disclosure. The availability of an empathic and knowledgeable support system was associated with a positive disclosure, while lack of same was associated with a negative disclosure. However, some support issues were not addressed, such as: whether the wife actively sought out support systems, what support systems she sought out, whether she was helped or rejected when she sought out support systems, and what type of support systems were most helpful. The present research will investigate more fully the types of support systems used immediately

post-disclosure, and which were perceived as most helpful to the wife.

Stigma.

Miller (1978) describes the gay husband as experiencing increased public stigma as he moves into the gay world. Gochros' (1985) study indicated that post-disclosure, the stigma shifted from the homosexual husband to the wife. The wives were stigmatized by merely loving and living with a homosexual--stigma by association. These two studies indicate that both the husband and wife may experience stigma post-disclosure. Past research indicates that the stigma exists and creates a different situation. Homosexuals generally perceive that societal reactions towards them are negative (Bell & Weinberg, 1978).

However, the respondents in Gochros' (1985) study were obtained from population areas where homosexuality is more acceptable, such as San Francisco and New York. Many other studies obtain their respondents from similar population areas (Dixon, D., 1985; Dixon, J, 1985). Therefore, perceived or real stigma may be an issue for women in a more conservative area of Canada.

AIDS.

Gochros' study was conducted in 1982, prior to AIDS emerging as a serious medical-health issue. While the issue of stigma perceived by the wives was discussed in the article, the AIDS issue was not mentioned. This study will address the issue of disclosure to wives as they react under new conditions with regards to a concern about the transmission of AIDS.

The AIDS issue creates a unique health-related problem for the wives. Around 1982, AIDS was recognized as a syndrome caused by human T-cell lymphotropic virus type III/lymphadenopathy-associated virus (HTLV-III/LAV) (Barre-Sinoussi, Chermann, Nugeyse, Charmaret, Gruest, Dauquet, & Axler-Glin, 1983; Kalyanaraman, Sarngadharan, Robert-Guroff, Blayney, Golde, Gallo, 1982; Fischl, Dickinson, Scott, Klimas, Fletcher, & Parks, 1987). To date, there is no known cure for AIDS. Once the AIDS virus is contracted, death is inevitable.

Previously, medical authorities thought that AIDS was transmitted male-to-male, and that female spouses should not be concerned about the transmission of AIDS. More recent medical studies indicate a high rate of

transmission of the AIDS virus (HTLV-III/LAV) among heterosexual couples (Fischl, et al., 1987). The incidence of HTLV-III/LAV infection among heterosexual spouses of bisexual males was 50%. The authors stated that the data demonstrate that continued heterosexual contact with an infected partner without preventive measures has a high probability of resulting in the AIDS virus infection.

Thus, wives of bisexuals now have to deal with the fear of acquiring AIDS from their spouses. Should the disclosure occur after several years of bisexual activity, the wife should be concerned about being at risk for acquiring AIDS or ARC (AIDS Related Complex).

These issues of stigma and, more importantly, AIDS, create a unique situation for the wife whose spouse engages in a homosexual EMR. The most salient factor to differentiate between Gochros' study and the present research is that the AIDS crisis has intervened to create a totally different situation. Wives have to deal with the issue of an EMR, the stigma of a homosexual EMR, plus the risk of acquiring AIDS themselves.

Most of the research on wives of homosexuals has been as a subset of research on their husbands psychological adjustment and/or the marital adjustment, not on the wives' responses. Also, past research which indicated that wives of homosexuals were neurotic was not substantiated by Gochros' study. This discrepancy and the lack of further research warrants this study on the reaction of wives to disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design

The research question was: What is the response of wives to the disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity? Guided by this question, a qualitative research design using a semi-structured interview was chosen for this study. The issues Gochros investigated and discussed formed the basis for the questions of the semi-structured interview schedule. This chapter will discuss the qualitative research design--the basic assumptions, research defense, the characteristics of methodological techniques including the place of theory and the sampling procedure and data analysis.

Rationale

The scientific paradigm can be placed at one end of a continuum where deductive research occurs, and the naturalistic at the other end where inductive research occurs. Along the continuum, progressing from scientific to naturalistic, research methodologies include phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions), structured interviews (closed-ended questions) and

experimental. When very little is known in a research area, qualitative methods predominate.

Qualitative or naturalistic research emphasizes hypothesis and theory-building rather than theory-testing. Naturalism portrays research as a process of exploration (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) where theory is developed. In areas where considerable information has been gathered on an issue, a theory can be developed to explain the phenomenon and tested by means of quantitative measures. However, for areas which still require further data in order to formulate a clearer picture of the phenomenon in question, qualitative measures are more efficient.

Depner, Wethington, & Ingersoll-Dayton (1984) discussed the unique functions of qualitative research. There are three: (a) it involves the perspective of respondents in formulating the research questions, (b) it searches for differences in meaning among respondents' answers, and (c) it uses the exact words of the respondents to express their personal experiences, rather than relying on the translation of these words into numerical categories.

Yin (1984) presents research strategies. Yin states that the decision as to which strategies to

employ is determined by the nature of the research question. Yin (1984) discusses three conditions to use as a criteria for that choice.

These three conditions consist of (a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent to which an investigator has control over the actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of which contemporary rather than historical events are the focus (Yin, 1984). The research question can be "how? why?" for both quantitative and qualitative studies, and the time focus for both is contemporary. The salient factor is the control of variables. With quantitative methods, the researcher has maximum control over behavioral events, while with qualitative methods the researcher has little or no control over the behavioral events. These three factors determine which method of research should be utilized in order to gain the desired knowledge.

Yin (1984) stated that if the research question focuses mainly on "what" questions, either of two possibilities of method choice arise. First, some types of "what" questions are exploratory, such as "What are the ways in which an effective school is operated?". Yin (1984) suggested that this type of

question is a justifiable rationale for conducting an exploratory study--the goal being to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further study. For this, any of the research strategies could be used. The second type of "what" question is actually a form of "how many" or "how much"--"What have been the outcomes from a particular managerial reorganization?". For these questions, survey or archival strategies are preferred.

For this study, the research question involved a "what" question, suggesting an exploratory research technique which would tend towards the qualitative end of the continuum, and indeed little research has been conducted in this area of study. Also, the purpose was to explore the event from the perspective of the respondent--her subjective viewpoint. The exploratory nature of the research question, the desire for the perspective of the respondents, no control over behavioral events and the lack of prior research from which to build theory all determined the research method to be used in this study--qualitative methodology.

A semi-structured, open-ended question interview schedule was chosen as a research method. An interview

is a face-to-face interpersonal role situation in which one person, the interviewer, asks the other person being interviewed, the respondent, questions designed to obtain information pertinent to the research problem (Kerlinger, 1986). Kerlinger (1986) described how it can be used as an exploratory device to help identify variables and relations. In particular, open-ended questions supply a frame of reference while allowing a minimum of restraint on the answers (Kerlinger, 1986). Respondents are allowed to convey the fine shades of their attitudes to their satisfaction (Kidder & Judd, 1986). Lofland and Lofland (1984) stated that interviewing is a guided conversation--the goal being to elicit from the respondent rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis.

Assumptions

Guba and Lincoln (1981) delineated the basic assumptions of qualitative research design. These assumptions include three areas: view of reality, inquirer/subject relationship, and the nature of truth statements.

View of reality.

Those doing qualitative research assume that reality is dynamic with multiple, divergent events

which are interrelated. Thus, the focus of research is on developing a clear, complete, accurate picture of the phenomenon under investigation in order to obtain deep, rich, valid and complex data on that particular phenomenon (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Reichardt & Cook, 1979).

Inquirer/subject relationship.

The relationship of inquirer/subject in qualitative research is reflexive where the researcher and the subject are interrelated in an interactional process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Reflexivity occurs as the researcher, the respondent, the data collected, and the social world interact as the study progresses (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The researcher becomes a part of the research environment. Here, subjectivity is not treated as a source of bias, but instead is exploited as a source of information. How respondents react to the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The goal is to obtain a sensitively accurate interpretation and explanation of humanity's social and cultural world (Bruyn, 1966).

Truth statements.

The last assumption involves the nature of truth statements. Qualitative research is interested in the whole context--everything is unique as research describes the social realm. Universal truths are not so much sought as are similarities from the data, i.e. patterns or themes.

Research Defense

Specific techniques guard against researcher bias and inadequate research methodological techniqies. These are credibility, auditability, fittingness, and confirmability.

Credibility.

Credibility is concerned with the truth value of the research results. Are the results and the categories that are assigned meaningful to people in the real world? That is, if three categories of responses are determined from the data, are these categories meaningful to the respondents who are part of the reality? The credibility of the research is established by analyzing the data from the initial interview and establishing the coding categories or issues. If the issues or categories continue to be

relevant to subsequent respondents, then that category is assessed as pertinent to most of the respondents.

The categories are submitted to fellow researchers for evaluation of credibility. Also, the content analysis, patterns analysis and model are evaluated by one of the respondents who acts as an informant. Morse (1986) suggested that the best informants are those who are marginal to the group--who have a select role in the group. If the categories of responses are understandable, and appear realistic to the informant, then the categories are considered to have credibility in the real world. The results have a high degree of credibility when they are evaluated as being understandable and realistic of the event by both respondents, who are part of the reality, and by knowledgeable researchers.

Auditability.

Auditability concerns the maintenance of accurate records of all stages of the research so that other researchers can think or work through all of the steps in sequence. Of importance is for the ability of other researchers to determine where the key decision points occurred. Research must have consistency so that other researchers can replicate the study. Since qualitative

research does not utilize standardized instruments, the steps of data collection and analysis procedures must be explicit in order to provide clear, unambiguous guidelines for replication of the research. Comprehensive field notes provide the key decision points and all pertinent information for duplication.

Fittingness.

Fittingness or applicability is the third concern. The data results are assessed for relevance to the reality of the phenomenon in the lives of the respondents by consulting with the informant. What is important is that the findings fit with reality for the informant. Once again, specific informants and knowledgeable researchers assess the degree of relevance of fit of the findings to the reality of the phenomenon.

Confirmability.

The last concern is that of confirmability--that is, that the results are not so idiosyncratic that other researchers cannot find the same categories. One method that can be used to assure confirmability is continuous checking and re-checking of the procedures of data collection and data analysis for credibility. Also, continuous checking and re-checking of data

collection and data analysis for auditability is another method. The researcher's subjectivity can be a tool for guiding the data collection and data analysis since the interviews will provide considerable exposure of the researcher to the episode in question, and thereby provide valuable insights. But subjectivity must continually be evaluated for idiosyncratic biases. The researcher's advisor and committee members serve as a double check for credibility and subjectivity on the part of the researcher.

Methodological Techniques

Theory.

Qualitative methods search for relevance of the methods and data collection to the research question(s). Theory is not established a priori to conducting the research. The theoretical framework emerges from and develops with the data collection and analysis.

The assumption is that the phenomenon being studied contains multiple, divergent, interrelated variables in the natural setting. What is investigated are those multi-faceted variables of the event. Any previous propositional, tacit or intuitive knowledge is accepted in the proposal in order to glean a wider body

of knowledge. The purpose of qualitative research is for the discovery of a wider knowledge base and the description of the event in question.

Sampling.

Since generalizability is salient in quantitative research, a larger sample size is required in order to ascertain that the entire population is being equally represented. The larger the sample size, the more likely it is that its mean will be close to the population mean (Kidder & Judd, 1986).

However, generalizability is not a primary concern in the qualitative approach. Rather, the concern is the description of the phenomenon. Thus, when datum becomes repetitious and no new datum is being gathered, the sample size is considered complete (Morse, 1986). In a qualitative study, the sample size is much smaller due to the nature of the type of data desired by the researcher.

Nonprobability sample.

A nonprobability sample is based on the assumption that not all actors in a setting are equally informed about the knowledge sought by the researcher (Morse, 1986). Some members of the group are privy to more information, have keener observational skills, and are

more interested in the research topic than are others. Also, some members are more receptive to being interviewed and therefore are more likely to disclose pertinent information. The purpose of selecting a nonprobability sample is to facilitate understanding, to describe, and to elicit meaning (Morse, 1986).

Selection of respondents is important. The researcher is interested in the meaning of the event to the individual and in understanding the disclosure. The object of the data collection is to obtain comprehensive, relevant, detailed, and voluminous notes on the experience (Morse, 1986). The sheer bulk limits sample size. Sample size is limited due to the time and effort required to collect data, making it imperative that the researcher maximize the opportunities to obtain the most insightful data. Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously as the meaning of the event unfolds. Sampling, and thus, data collection, cease when the meaning of the event becomes evident, and have been confirmed by a set of interviews.

Since the sample is drawn from volunteers, they cannot be said to be representative of the population. In the qualitative research, the researcher is seeking

to understand meaning, to describe or understand a setting or concept, or, as in this study, to understand the meaning of an event to an individual. For this purpose a nonprobability sample should be used (Morse, 1986). However, since the research is qualitative, generalizabilty is not a salient issue. The more important issues are sample appropriateness and adequacy.

Appropriateness.

Sample appropriateness maximizes the researcher's access to data that is representative and contributes to understanding and insight (Morse, 1986). Sample appropriateness is assessed by the degree to which the respondent has been a participant in the event or phenomenon under investigation. A respondent is unable to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon if he or she has not had experience with that particular phenomenon.

Adequacy.

Sample adequacy is determined by the quality and amount of information (Morse, 1986). Sample adequacy is controlled by assessing the degree to which a respondent is willing to discuss the issues. A respondent may have experienced the phenomenon but be

unwilling to communicate his or her response. Lack of communication is then evaluated as lack of adequacy.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures are delineated according to the guidelines discussed by Lofland and Lofland (1984) for analysis of qualitative research. First, three types of files are established--mundane, field notes, and analytic.

Files.

Mundane files are those secretarial files which contain respondents' names, addresses and pertinent documentations (i.e., Informed Consent forms). Each respondent has a file for record-keeping purposes. The record-keeping files are coded by number, not name.

Field note files contain the "how" of the research procedures. Here, notes are made about who is being interviewed, when the interview is conducted, what special circumstances are involved in the interview, any alterations to the design of interview and the rationale for those changes, and any pertinent observations, analytic ideas, inferences and personal data. These files are maintained in a chronological order, so as to provide instructions for replication of

the research. This is necessary for the establishment of auditability.

Analytic files make up the bulk of the files. Analytic files include the audio tapes, the computer disks onto which the audio tapes have been transcribed, the computer print-outs of the verbatim interviews (coded by number only), the content analysis of each individual interview, as well as the numerous analysis records. Once content analysis has been performed, the computer is used to assemble categories. This eliminates the old cut-and-paste method of content analysis.

Thinking units.

Interview data is analyzed by thinking units which describe the social organization. Lofland and Lofland (1984) discussed eleven thinking units: meanings, practices, episodes, encounters, roles, relationships, groups, organizations, settlements, worlds, and lifestyles. A unit is a tool to use in scrutinizing the data. The highest thinking unit which pertains to the research area and those below are used (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

For this study, the largest thinking unit was the episode which was dramatic and remarkable to the

participant, i.e. disclosure. The smaller thinking units of practices (a recurrent behavior or talk which the observer deemed significant) and meaning (linguistic categories which make up the participants' view of reality) were examined as well.

The unit's processes are discussed by Lofland and Lofland (1984). They define a process as a continuing operation or development marked by a series of gradual changes that succeed one another in a relatively fixed manner. One way of studying the sequencing of a process is from the trace-forward starting point where the researcher is concerned with what happens *after* a decisive event.

Coding categories.

From the initial interviews emerge the coding categories for the thinking units. In subsequent interviews, the same interview schedule is used. But the researcher deliberately probes from a slightly different perspective as well as direct inquires about the response.

Further interviews are analyzed to determine which categories of responses are common to all the respondents. Those coding categories which appear consistently are determined as primary categories,

while less frequent categories are assessed as secondary.

Still further interviews are conducted with the same opening question and interview schedule in order to confirm previous findings. At this point, if the same primary categories emerge, the data collected is verified. When new data is not emerging, the categories are assessed as reflecting the meaning of the event for the individual respondent. The sample size is considered complete.

Once the interviews have been conducted, they are transcribed verbatim for analysis. Several steps occur.

First, content analysis is conducted to determine responses in thinking units of meanings and practices, and frequency of similar responses. A note is made of responses. Then, further interviews are analyzed to determine if those same responses recurred. Further verification is sought from the analysis of another set of interviews. From the content analysis comes the categories of responses which form the model.

Second, overall patterns of responses are sought, as well as patterns of lack of response as expected. Third, a model of the sequencing of events for the

majority of respondents is established. Last, an analysis of the demograhpics is conducted for frequencies.

The qualitative approach is based on the premise that the perspective of the respondents play an important role in formulating the research question, since the respondents are the ones knowledgeable about the event being studied. Qualitative research can be used in an exploratory manner to help define the parameters of a problem area which is then investigated further using quantitative research methods (Depner, Wethington, & Ingersoll-Dayton, 1984).

CHAPTER FOUR

Methods

Procedures and Design

The research question, the degree of control over the phenomenon, and the amount of previous research in the area determine the research design. This researcher asked the question "what", there was no control over the phenomenon being studied, and there had been very little research in the area of concern. When the research question is "what" and there is no control of variables, an exploratory research design using qualitative techniques is best suited (Yin, 1984).

A semi-structured interview was used since there had been a little research conducted on wives of homosexuals, but very little. Findings from past research were used as a guide for the questions. The semi-structured interview was designed to probe for a more detailed description of the phenomenon without an a priori commitment to a theoretical framework (Yin, 1984). The semi-structured interview (Appendix 1) was designed around the issues Gochros (1985) investigated in her study on wives. Two further, more structured, questions were added to Gochros' questions: 1.) How

has AIDS affected you?, and 2.) Have you felt any stigma?.

Respondents were contacted through a third person who ascertained that the respondents were willing to be phoned in order to discuss participation in the study. During the initial contact with the researcher, respondents were provided with information about informed consent, methods of maintaining anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. If respondents were willing to participate, appointments were set up for interviews.

Prior to commencing the interview, each subject was asked to read the Informed Consent form (Appendix 2) and ask any questions about the procedures or the research. Once the subject verbally stated an understanding, she was asked to sign the Informed Consent form, she was given twenty dollars in cash, and the interview proceeded. During the interview, a Demographic Face-Sheet (Appendix 3) was filled out, then the audio-taped interview was conducted with the aid of the semi-structured interview sheet. The researcher probed further on issues which were deemed pertinent.

The researcher discussed with the respondents the importance of taping the interview as a memory device and requested permission from the respondent to audio-tape the session. No respondents declined permission. Audio-taped interviews are preferable for data analysis because verbatim data is available, which is preferable to relying on the researcher's memory.

Qualitative research is reflexive in nature. Thus, during the research, the researcher recorded field notes on areas such as specific problems with access, interviews, any new issues to probe during interviews, evaluations of interviews as probes to jog the researcher's memory about specific respondents. This information was valuable as some of this information was crucial in the decision to alter some criteria for respondents. Any analytic ideas and inferences were recorded as field notes and referred to during data analysis. Any personal reactions and emotions of the researcher were recorded. The reflexive nature means that the researcher's response to the study is important data, as are the respondent's reactions to the study and researcher.

After the first set of interviews, an assessment was made of further issues which appeared to be

significant. The issue which arose was that of what the couple's relationship had been prior to marriage and during the marriage. Therefore, the subsequent two sets of interviews were started with the question: How did you meet and what was your relationship like prior to the disclosure?

Sample

The subjects for this study were wives of homosexual men who disclosed their homosexual orientation and/or activity post-marriage. Since the objective of the study is to investigate responses to the disclosure, a time lapse of a minimum of three months post-disclosure was required for the wives to qualify. Two subjects were told of their husbands' orientation prior to marriage but were not aware of the repercussions until post-marriage. Since the awareness of homosexuality was not present until after marriage, these two subjects were deemed appropriate.

Posters to recruit subjects were placed in various medical centres, social service offices, psychologist's offices and mental health therapists' offices. An advertisement was placed in the University of Alberta student newspaper--the GATEWAY. However, no subjects responded to the advertising.

Then, the time limit was raised to two years. One subject responded to a poster in the STD (Sexually Transmitted Disease) Clinic. However, she did not qualify on the basis that she was not appropriate since she was aware of her husbands' homosexual orientation and activity prior to marriage. She was assessed as not adequate when during the telephoned interview, she simply stated her name, that her husband was gay, and that the researcher should talk with her husband. The researcher evaluated that she would not provide an adequate volume of information.

Two subjects who qualified were discovered and were contacted by a third party. However, these women refused to take part in the study. They stated that they did not want to talk about the situation. Therefore, it was decided that the time frame had to be increased from two years.

The events of the Stonewall Incident and the Quebec Charter of Rights amendment occurred in relatively the same time frame in the late sixties and early seventies. Therefore, the mid-seventies was decided upon as a time criterion for post-disclosure of the subjects. The assumption was made that those events would create a more open atmosphere in which the

husbands would be more willing to disclose their sexual orientation to their wives.

Two wives were found who were over the time limit (15 and 20 years). Initially, one was interviewed to determine if she fit the criteria of appropriateness and adequacy. However, her reactions did not differ significantly from the other respondents. Subsequently, that respondent and the other one were included in the study. Initially, subjects were rejected on the basis that wives pre mid-seventies would react differently to the disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity than wives past that time factor. However, that was not found to be true.

The subjects were obtained by means of volunteer and snowball contact. Initially, volunteer subjects were recruited through G.A.T.E. (Gay Alliance Towards Equality), Gay Fathers and Lesbian Mothers Support Group, and contacts in the gay community (churches). Newspaper advertisements and posters distributed throughout the city again failed to yield any results.

The initial respondents provided referrals of friends and other respondents. When a volunteer respondent was aware of another wife who would qualify

for the study, she was requested to contact that person herself to ask that other person if she was willing to participate in the study. If the person indicated a willingness to participate, then the volunteer respondent was allowed to provide the researcher with the nominated respondent's name and phone number. Then, the researcher contacted the nominated respondent personally to request participation in the study.

Some of the volunteer respondent offered names of other nominated respondent, some of whom initially were not willing to be part of the research. The volunteer respondents acted as liaisons between the researcher and the nominated respondent. The trust relationship already established between the volunteer respondent and the nominated respondent was used to aid in the establishment of a trust relationship between the nominated respondent and the researcher. This provided the researcher with credibility and facilitated the nominated respondent's willingness to participate.

Funding.

Funding for the research was provided by Small Faculties Grants under a grant awarded to Dr. B. Munro. From this grant, respondents were paid twenty dollars for their participation in this research.

Sample size.

Final sample size was ten respondents (N=10). Sample size emerged with the interviews and was determined by the information gathered, which is appropriate for qualitative research. The first set of three interviews determined categories, which were then elaborated and confirmed with the second set of four respondents. A further set of three interviews verified the themes and patterns. Since the categories of responses appeared consistently, the sample size was determined to be complete. When the data becomes repetitious, further interviews are considered to be redundant.

Sample appropriateness.

Sample appropriateness maximizes the researcher's access to data that is representative and contributes to understanding and insight (Morse, 1986). Appropriateness was ascertained by the criteria of the wives of husbands who disclosed their homosexual activity and/or orientation post-marriage. Two of the husbands had informed their wives of their homosexual orientation and feelings prior to marriage, but as one stated, "I had no comprehension of what it (homosexuality) really meant." Both were included in

the study because for them the actual emotional, and psychological disclosure occurred post-marriage, even though the information was available to them prior to marriage. After analysis, respondents who discovered their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity two years ago could not be distinguished in their responses from those who found out twenty years ago. The women appeared to maintain their memories of the events regardless of time post-disclosure.

Sample adequacy.

Sample adequacy is determined by the quality and amount of information (Morse, 1986). Sample adequacy was controlled by assessing the degree to which a respondent was willing to discuss the issues. All of the subjects were assessed as adequate. Although some had stated that they had never really talked in depth about their experience, they all shared liberally. No one refused to answer any question, and all of them elaborated spontaneously on many issues. No respondent indicated that she was unwilling to continue the interview. However, had that occurred, her request would have been acknowledged and the interview would have been terminated. That respondent would not then

have been included in the sample on the basis of lack of adequacy.

Survivor effect.

The sample does have a limitation--that of survivor effect. The degree of psychological, emotional, and financial resources available to the wife may determine the degree to which she copes post-disclosure. Presumably, those women who are not coping adequately, would not have volunteered for the research. Most likely, those who volunteered represented a group of wives who are coping more adequately. Those women may have characteristics not representative of the population of wives of homosexuals as a whole. However, the intent of the research was to observe patterns of responses of wives of homosexuals as a group to disclosure.

Demographics

A Demographic Fact-Sheet (Appendix 3) was completed with each respondent at the beginning of the interview. The areas of concern were her present age, hers' and her husbands' age at time of disclosure, educational background and economic status at time of disclosure, and place of residence for both spouses as children and during the marriage. Further questions

regarding years married to her homosexual spouse and children from the marriage were asked as well as the number of years post-disclosure. The last set of questions pertained to religious affiliation for both spouses as children and in the marriage.

Ethical Considerations

Since the disclosure of the names of the wives or the names of their spouses or ex-spouses may have repercussions, strict anonymity was promised. If husbands' names were revealed, some could be harrassed at work or have their jobs terminated. For this reason disclosure is a great risk for wives who depend on financial support for themselves and/or their children. Although the use of pseudonyms was offered to the respondents, none of them wished to use a pseudonym. Therefore, each respondent was coded with a letter-number code, e.g. B-3. The letter indicated the set of interviews (A's were set 1, B's set 2, and C's set 3), and the number indicated the first, second or third being interviewed in that particular set.

Each respondent was asked if she wanted to have the results mailed to her; all answered in the

affirmative. Family names were obtained with permission for the purpose of mailing the results of the study to each respondent. Respondents were asked for names, addresses, and phone numbers. This information was stored at all times in a locked container and used only for access to respondents for interview appointments, further contacts for debriefing, sending research results and acknowledgments.

Many of the issues discussed were sensitive. Respondents may have residual traumatic feelings which may be revived with their recall of intimate information about themselves and their husbands. To guard against unnecessary distress, brochures on community social support groups and agencies were made available to all respondents. Community agencies who are capable and willing to deal with homosexual and especially bisexual issues were screened and their names were provided as referrals.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis proceeded according to the guidelines delineated by Lofland and Lofland (1984) for analysis of qualitative research. Three types of files were established--mundane, field notes, and analytic.

Mundane files were those secretarial files which contain respondents' names, addresses and pertinent documentations (Informed Consent forms). Each respondent had a file for record-keeping purposes. The record-keeping files were coded by number, not name.

Field note files contained the "how" of the research procedures. Here notes were made about who was interviewed, when the interview was conducted, what special circumstances were involved in the interview, any alterations made to the design of interviews and the rationale for those changes. Also, any pertinent observations, analytic ideas, inferences and personal data were recorded. These files were maintained in a chronological order, so as to provide instructions for replication of the research. This was necessary for the establishment of auditability.

Analytic files made up the bulk of the files. Analytic files included the audio tapes, the computer disks on which the audio tapes had been transcribed, the computer print-outs of the verbatim interviews (coded by number only), the content analysis of each individual interview, and the numerous analysis records. Once content analysis had been performed, the computer was used to assemble the categories. This

eliminated the old cut-and-paste method of content analysis.

As each analytic idea emerged, a memo was made. These analytic memos were assembled to provide an overall structure or general design for the analysis. Once the general design was determined, the data were organized into the design. Much of the analytic memos were integral in the design of the model of disclosure.

Once the interviews had been conducted, they were transcribed verbatim onto a computer. Then the computer printouts were used for analysis.

The largest thinking unit investigated was the episode which was dramatic and remarkable to the participant. The smaller thinking units of practices and meaning were examined as well.

First, content analysis was conducted to determine responses and frequency of similar responses. Second, overall patterns of responses were sought, as well as patterns of lack of response as expected. Third, a model of the sequencing of events was established for the majority of respondents. Last, an analysis of the demographics was conducted for frequencies.

The first analysis was for frequency of content, such as anger. As the researcher read through the

interview transcript, a note was made of responses. Then, further interviews were read to determine if those same responses recurred. Further verification was sought from the analysis of another set of interviews. From the content analysis came the categories of responses which formed the model.

The coding categories for the thinking units emerged from the initial interviews. In the subsequent interviews, the same interview schedule was used while the researcher probed from a slightly different perspective as well as directly inquired about the response.

Further interviews were analyzed to determine which categories of responses were common to all of the respondents. Those coding categories which appeared consistently were determined as primary categories, while less frequent categories were assessed as secondary.

Further interviews were conducted with the same interview schedule in order to confirm previous findings. At this point, if the same primary categories emerged, the data collected were verified. When new data were not emerging, the categories were assessed as reflecting the meaning of the event for the

individual respondent. The sample size was considered to be complete.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

Analysis Procedures

Data analysis proceeded according to the guidelines delineated by Lofland and Lofland (1984) for analysis of qualitative research. Once the interviews had been conducted, they were transcribed verbatim for analysis which included content analysis, overall patterns of responses, the sequencing of events in a model, and a demographic analysis.

The largest thinking unit was the episode which was dramatic and remarkable to the participant. For this study, this episode was the disclosure of the husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. The smaller thinking units of practices and meaning were examined as well. These categories were what the wives did in response to the disclosure and how they viewed their reality.

From the initial three interviews emerged the coding categories which were utilized in the subsequent interviews. While the same interview schedule was used, specific categories of responses were probed.

For example, in the first three interviews when the subjects were asked about their perception of

stigma, their response was that they perceived no stigma. Their response was not probed from a different angle. Upon analysis, one respondent stated that she perceived no stigma, yet at another point of the interview stated that she did not feel free to tell people that her husband was homosexual. In subsequent interviews, the researcher deliberately probed from the perspective of freedom to tell people as well as directly inquiring about perceived stigma.

Using the same interview schedule, the second set of interviews was conducted. The only difference was that to start the interview, each respondent was asked to tell how she and her husband met and a little about their relationship prior to the disclosure. This question was included to provide a neutral beginning in order to ease into the interview. Also, in the first set, one respondent stated that her and her husband's pre-marriage relationship had been short. It was thought that this could be a pattern. This question proved to be valuable in that a pattern emerged of a short pre-marriage relationship, and a satisfying pre-disclosure relationship--as one respondent stated, he was "a knight in shining armor."

The second set of interviews was analyzed to determine common categories of responses between the first and second set of interviews. Those coding categories which appeared consistently were determined as primary categories, while less frequent categories were assessed as secondary. The same categories emerged in the second set as did in the first set of interviews.

Two respondents who were over the ten-year time limit were incorporated into the second set which included a respondent who had discovered her husband's homosexual orientation and activity twenty years prior. When these data were analyzed and compared with the other more recent respondents, there appeared to be no major differences in the responses. The categories fit. Therefore, time did not appear to affect the recall of the memories.

The third set of three interviews was conducted with the same opening question and interview schedule with three new respondents. At this point, the same primary categories emerged and verified the data collected. In this set, the time since disclosure had been relatively recent for two of the respondents. Once again, the previous categories fit with these new

respondents' data. Since new data were not emerging, the categories were assessed as reflecting the meaning of the event for the individual woman. The sample was considered complete.

Once the patterns had been established and a model of wives' response to disclosure had been formulated, the findings were given to a secondary informant to evaluate. This informant was chosen on the basis that she had a select role in the group of wives. This particular informant has been willing to counsel with other wives when they find out about their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity.

Demographic Findings

Demographically, the respondents were varied. The age of the respondents ranged at the time of disclosure from 22 to 52 years ($\bar{X}$= 34.1) and their husbands ranged in age from 21 to 44 years ($\bar{X}$= 33.5). Present age range was 24 to 60 years with an average of 41.3 years. Educationally, respondents varied from high school to graduate level. The majority had obtained some post-secondary training. The majority of the wives and husbands were employed in white-collar positions. While all of the respondents resided in urban areas at present, their residence and their husbands' residence

as children were approximately half urban and half rural.

Some marital statistics were obtained as well. The average number of years married to the homosexual spouse was 12.2 years with a range of 5 months to 22 years. The average number of children from the marriage was 2.7, with younger respondents not having any children. Only one of the respondents had been previously married, and none of the respondents who separated had re-married. Two of the respondents continued to reside with their spouse, and one returned after a separation of 18 years. The average number of years post-disclosure was 7.3 years with a range of 1 to 20 years. Four respondents were separated from their husbands with the average separation time being 5 years, with no remarriage or reconciliation. The average combined income of the couple at the time of disclosure was $31,000. to $40,000., which represented a fairly adequate income considering the average time post-disclosure was 7.3 years.

Religious variables indicated that the majority of respondents and their spouses had some religious affiliation when they were children. However, only

half reported any religious affiliation during the marriage.

Model of Response to Disclosure

First, interviews with subjects were transcribed verbatim. Then the content of the verbatim interviews was analyzed for frequencies of responses in order to deteremine if a response was unique to one wife or there was a pattern of responses. The time sequencing patterns revealed responses which were unique to time-specific stages and were integrated into a model of the wives' responses to the disclosure of their spouses' homosexual orientation and/or activity. In this model, wives' responses to disclosure are placed in five stages where specific constellations of reactions occured. These stages are presented and discussed in order. Appendix 4 illustrates the model.

Stage One - Pre-disclosure

In Stage One, all respondents reported the presence of clues which were recognized post-disclosure. Also, for many there existed a short engagement period as well as a good marital relationship pre-disclosure.

Denial of clues.

The majority of respondents stated that in looking back, they could see that there had been signs, i.e. his being aware of a good looking "guy" walking past, but not a good looking "gal". Some husbands even told their wives of some of their homosexual experiences prior to marriage. One respondent stated:

> he told me before we were married, that he had had this homosexual experience. But to me, he might as well (have) told me (in) a foreign language. I'd never heard of a homosexual... I mean I knew he was gay. I thought he was gay for a long time... I guess what you don't want to see, you don't see, like I should have known. I should have seen it.

Nearly all of the women (N=8) reported post-disclosure recognizing clues. If those clues had been taken seriously, the clues would have indicated a homosexual orientation. As some stated, they saw and dealt with what they wanted to see and deal with, not with what was a reality for them. "he had been dropping hints... I just didn't pick up on it at all." "the clues were there and I just rationalized and ignored them." While the disclosure was a sudden

event, usually, there had been many clues over time which became meaningful post-disclosure.

Miller (1979) stated that wives were confronted with their own deceit as well as the deceit of their husbands. He appeared to suggest that wives consciously deny the clues and deceive themselves. These women certainly denied the clues, but did not do so consciously. Only after the disclosure did the clues have any meaning for them.

Another respondent realized post-disclosure that all the signs of her husband's homosexual orientation prior to marriage were there. But as she stated: "It went straight over my head." She, as well, did not realize the effect that his homosexual orientation would have on their marital relationship.

Two women were told of their husbands' homosexual orientation prior to marriage. One respondent stated that she knew very clearly that her husband had a homosexual orientation prior to marriage. However, she did not realize what repercussions that would or could possibly have in their marriage. She assumed that his homosexual orientation would not affect their marriage.

Engagement period.

Some of the respondents (N=4) reported that they had had a short engagement period. "Three weeks later we were engaged." Along with that, for some their husbands had been their first lover and consequently they were not sexually experienced prior to marriage. "I had never experienced making love to anybody."

Marital relationship.

Seven of the women reported having a good marriage relationship prior to the disclosure. "We were such good friends and were able to communicate so well. After we got married, that continued." For some, in the last few months prior to the disclosure, some stress and tension were perceived in the marital relationship. However, for other women the disclosure was a complete surprise. One respondent stated that their relationship had been excellent--"Our first year together was...right out of a fairy tale. (He was) very charming and a perfect gentleman, very understanding....like this was my knight in shining armor."

This stage did last for several years in some cases. Whether this stage lasted two years or fifteen

years, the denial of clues continued until some event (finding homosexual magazines, the husband telling their wives they are gay) was so evident, clear and concrete that the wives could no longer deny the clues. "We sat one night and watched a movie called *Making Love*. We watched that movie and things started sinking in... and that's when it really hit me....he is bi-sexual." In order for these women to process the information, it had to be presented in such a manner so as to leave no reasonable doubt.

Disclosure

While clues of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity were present prior to the disclosure, for most women the dislcosure was a sudden, surprise event, as indicated by the solid vertical line on the model separating Stage One and Two. They had realized prior that something was wrong, even though they could not determine what that something was. But once that realization occurred, the information of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity could not be denied; it had to be dealt with somehow.

For the majority, the information was provided by their husbands. As a rule, the men were experiencing personal distress and could not handle the stress of

withholding information about an important part of themselves. The disclosure was simply an explanation for that distress. "I found out directly from him...he had been dropping hints...he knew he could not go on any longer living a double life. So he just simply told me." "He has never been dishonest with me and he wasn't here either. It's just, he was still struggling with it."

Stage Two - Accommodation to Husband

In Stage Two, respondents tended to deny the disclosure while attempting to accommodate to their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. They appeared to cling to their ideal of a marriage and a family. For most women, it was a time of confusion, empathy, self-blame and suggesting their spouse attempt a trial gay relationship.

Denial of homosexual orientation and/or activity.

Denial of their husbands' disclosure of homosexual orientation and/or behavior was experienced by many (N=6) of the respondents. "The denial, the shock...I couldn't believe this was really real."

One women stated that when her husband told her, she assumed that she could alter his homosexual desires and in her own way denied the impact of the disclosure.

"I thought I could change him. I thought that I could in some way make him forget about men."

Maintaining the family - Cling to the ideal.

Maintaining a family system was important to these women. Most tried to maintain the family system status quo in some form. "I always wanted a family....I always wanted him to be with me so we could be a family."

Gay lover.

Others suggested variations on the two-parent family system. A few of the women (N=3) had made an attempt to befriend the gay lover, even to the point of inviting him to dinner and/or inviting him to stay in the family home. These wives attempted to accommodate to their husbands' sexual needs. "I remember one time even suggesting, why don't you have him (gay lover) move in with us?... Because I wanted him. I could not see myself living without him."

However, two of the wives stated that when they did see their husband with his gay lover, they experienced considerable hurt and anger, especially when there were romantic interchanges. "How come he can't be affectionate with me, and yet (he) shows affection to a man?"

Several respondents suggested to their husbands that they experiment with the homosexual life style to determine whether they really were homosexual. "I tried to encourage him to explore it (the gay life), because I thought that if we were ever to have a chance....he should know how he felt."

Trial relationship.

Also, a few wives suggested to their spouses that he move in and reside with the gay lover to discover if the relationship would work. Six of the respondents instructed their husbands to leave the marital relationship for a period of time and reside with or have more intense contact with their gay lover so that they could be sure that they indeed had a homosexual orientation. They felt that their husbands would not have a realistic idea of what a gay relationship was like if their marrriage remained intact. If their husbands were freed for a time from the commitment to their marriage, then perhaps the husbands would choose between their wives and a gay lifestyle with more knowledge and experience.

One respondent indicated that the motivation behind this suggestion was to provide her husband with the opportunity to experience the on going, day-to-day

mundane living with a gay spouse. She felt that her husband's experience with his gay lover was appealing partly because it was an extended honeymoon, rather than a daily living relationship.

Children

Several respondents explained how they set aside their own issues and feelings in deference for the family. "I wanted to keep everything on an even keel for the family."

Seven of the respondents had children. For those respondents, there was a desire to maintain the family system for the sake of the children. Often children were not told of their father's homosexual orientation and/or activity. Some were told later and even some older adolescents were not told.

Those respondents who had children, stated that telling their children about the fathers' homosexual orientation and/or activity facilitated their coping. They felt that after the disclosure to their children, the issues could be discussed as a family. They were no longer hiding information from their immediate family.

Confusion

Several women spoke of being very confused about what would have been their husbands' motivation for marrying them in the first place if he knew he had homosexual feelings. "very confused, his dishonesty with himself, and me. Why would he get married knowing he was homosexual?"

Confusion also stemmed from the realization that their husband had been a kind, loving spouse and yet he had been living a lie.

> Everything he's told me ...has been a lie...I thought, it's hard to hate him. He's really a nice guy. He's got to be the best guy I've ever met. ...Like he's got to be the most kind, gentle... And I kept thinking I cannot cope with this.

Objective point of view.

A sense of detachment was described by half of the respondents: a feeling of "the walls going up", a sense of being able to see the situation from a logical, objective viewpoint, yet realizing that they were deeply hurting inside. Later, those feels emerged and had to be dealt with. One respondent stated: "It was

almost like I was two people...I understood his feelings. I would not look at my own emotions for the longest while." "There have been times when I felt I was two people...a person that is participating and the person that is standing and watching."

Somehow, these women tended to be able to put aside their personal feelings of hurt and anger and go on with life for all appearances to the outside world as though nothing had happened. "If you've got a family or you've got to go to work, you can't bawl your eyes out all night and then go to work the next day,..you just sort of have to block it out and go on..."

Empathy for spouse.

Four of the respondents experienced a sense of empathy for their spouses. They realized that if they were experiencing difficulty due to the negative sanctioning against homosexuals by society, then their spouses must be feeling that much more distress. This relates to the sense of detachment in that the wives were able to be objective and view the situation from their husbands' viewpoint.

Many respondents expressed their anger towards society for its negative sanctioning and discrimination

against gays as a whole. They felt that their husbands had been forced to marry in order to please society. "I guess it makes me mad that society makes so many of these guys marry when they should have never married." If society was more accepting of gays, then these women's husbands would not have perceived the pressure to marry and have a family like "normal" people, and in turn the respondents would not have found themselves married to gay men.

Self-blame.

One of the initial reactions for most of the women was the feeling of self-blame. Maybe their husbands' homosexual orientation was as a result of their lack of providing as a female spouse or lover. If they had tried harder to please their husband, if they had engaged in certain sexual practices, if they were more of a woman, then perhaps their husbands would not have been displeased with them and sought out homosexual experiences. "I felt guilty....I thought all I needed to do was try harder." "I thought well, maybe it's me... your first instinct is you start blaming yourself."

Also, many realized that something was stressful in the relationship but could not determine the cause

of the stress. They attributed the cause of the stress to something they may have done or could change. "There was something wrong and I thought it was me so it took a long time after he told me to convince myself that it really wasn't my fault."

Communication.

While verbal communication increased for half of the respondents post-disclosure, sexual communication ceased immediately for an equal number. Of the two couples who remained together, the wives reported good verbal and sexual communication prior to disclosure and even better communication post-disclosure.

Stage Three - Self-awareness

Stage Three emerged as the wives became more aware of and started to deal with their own feelings. For some, there was a lapse of several months before they could allow themselves to deal with their own hurts. The duration of Stage Two was from a few minutes to eight months.

If Stage Two was shortened, often there was a vacillation between accommodation and self-awareness as indicated by the dotted vertical line between Stage Two and Three. Anger would emerge at times and then a desire to accept the husbands' orientation and life

style at other times. Once the women allowed themselves to become aware of their feelings, they did not return to accommodation. The two wives who had remained in the marriage did not blame themselves, deny their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity, or attempt to accommodate. These women set ground rules whereby they could remain in the marriage and expected their spouses to comply (i.e., expectations of monogamy and/or honesty).

During this stage, the delayed reaction became evident as the women allowed themselves to experience feelings such as shock, hurt, relief, anger, abandonment, a continued empathy for spouse, a sense of disillusionment, and do a great deal of crying. In this stage, women became aware of their support systems, and began to seek out help. New ways of coping were initiated as old ones failed. There appeared to be an attempt to come to grips with the reality of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity and their degree of control over that orientation. That process appeared to be very difficult and painful as many experienced a lowered self-esteem. Many felt isolated and alone--like they were the only ones experiencing this phenomenon.

Awareness of own feelings.

In this stage, feelings of anger, hurt and resentment emerged for most of the respondents. During this stage, most of the women cried considerably.

> all my sense of outrage, abandonment, of resentment, of frustration...all came out and I cried and cried and cried and I went around the house beating on doors and walls. If I could have gotten a hold of him with my bare hands....that was when I started...to be able to say that I was hurting."

"pure anger. Anger, anger, anger...the shock." "I was ashamed. I was embarrassed." "I wasn't mad. I was so absolutely hurt....how could he do it to me? I just felt hurt. Incredibly hurt." "I resented what he had put me through."

Their anger was directed at themselves, their husbands and society. Many expressed that they were angry at themselves for not having seen the clues sooner, and for not taking the clues seriously--they should have known. Their anger towards their husbands tended to be directed at the lies. They felt that their marriage had been a lie. "everything he had told me to build me up all these years, suddenly it was all

a big lie." Anger and hurt emerged from the feeling or belief that their husbands had used them to create a sense of normalcy to the outside world. "I thought this man loved me...I was used, the deception, the total deception. Like I was going to be used to give this man normalcy."

Their anger towards society was directed at the pressure society places on gay men not to be gay, but instead to act out a heterosexual lifestyle. This, in turn, produced a feeling of empathy for their husbands in that they felt that society had placed a great deal of pressure on their husbands to appear "normal" by being married and having a family. Even though she felt anger at another time, one woman stated: "I felt very little bitterness or malice towards him because I saw how he struggled with it." While they tended to feel that they had been used, they also felt that their husbands had been pressured into an unfair position.

Delayed reaction to anger.

There appeared to be a delayed reaction to anger. While the anger was immediate and very real, often the women did not realize the full extent of their anger for several months. Immediately, they would feel angry and hurt, but the more urgent tasks of taking care of

the family and the household took precedence over the working through of their anger. "I just would not look at my own emotions for the longest while...anger surfaced in six months." "I'd say about two months (to feel the anger)."

One respondent reported that for six months she was very understanding of her husband's dilemma, accommodated to his issues and needs, and was very objective about the whole situation. Then, one weekend six months later, she completely fell apart and experienced not only anger, but rage. Part of the delayed reaction appears to be a denial of the reality of the situation, denial of how the situation impacted her, and denial of her own feelings.

Another respondent learned of her husbands' homosexual orientation and activity in a sudden disclosure. She described herself as feeling incredibly hurt but not angry. She detached herself for a few hours by simply physically escaping the situation. Then, out of sheer habit, she returned home to make dinner and perform her usual homemaking duties. However, months later her anger emerged as she attempted to cope with her husband's lover.

Disillusionment.

Several women expressed that prior to the disclosure they had believed that whatever problems would arise in the relationship could be overcome if they simply worked on resolving the conflict--nothing was insurmountable. However, this time no amount of problem-solving helped.

> I guess I always believed whatever little things were wrong with our marriage, we could work at them. And this was the first time where I finally had to throw it out the window, and say, this isn't going to change... (it) really shot a hole through one of my ideals.

Seek help.

All of the women realized that they were not able to handle the siutation on their own and that they required some form of help in coping. Some sought out one person to talk with--usually not a close friend or a member of their family. "I tried to find somebody to talk to." Seven respondents sought professional counselling. "I wasn't able to handle this and I just knew that I had to have professional help to go on..."

Three described and analyzed their feelings by writing in a journal. "Working it out myself...I wrote...every night in a journal that I kept...I couldn't find anything to read on the subject. I didn't even want to go to counselling about it. I thought, who's going to counsel me on this?" All used some form of verbalizing their feelings in order to make some sense of the situation.

Support systems.

All of the women reported seeking out only one or two people to talk to about their feelings and reactions to the disclosure. One of the respondents stated her reason:

> ..any divorce is a crisis but this especially is,... there's so much that is different about it because you can't talk to your friends about it. I guess it's partly because you're keeping stuff from other people so you're also keeping stuff from yourself. You're not admitting all that is there because if there's ever a crack in the facade then you've gone and spilled the beans at the wrong time to the wrong person...so you even pretend to yourself that there isn't anything different about this.

The seeking of one confidant involved isolation from former supports. Isolation also led to denial to one's self and to others of the problems, and led to the sense of detachment to guard against disclosure at an inappropriate time or place.

Nine of the wives preferred not to become part of a support group for wives. They refrained from seeking out larger groups for emotional and psychological support. These findings concur with Coleman's (1985) research findings in which wives were reluctant to seek out support groups.

When asked who was the most helpful, half of the respondents stated that the one or two people with whom they could talk about their feelings were the most helpful. "It was very helpful to have people to talk to." "I had someone that still seemed to care for me that knew everything and it made no difference to her whatsoever."

Both women whose marriages remained intact reported that talking with their husbands about their feelings was the most helpful. Two women indicated that their inability to have more than one or two people be aware of their feeling was the least helpful.

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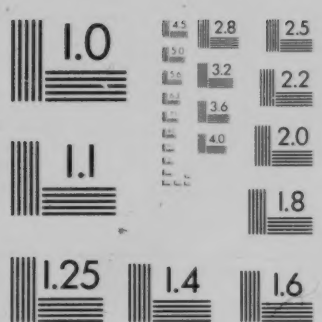

MicroD

"I think probably if I could have talked more openly with my friends right away it would have helped."

In a study on the roles of social support in the adjustment of women to marital disruption, Wilcox (1981) found that larger networks were predictive of a more positive adjustment than smaller ones. However, all of the respondents in this study reported a smaller network. Also, the assumption is made that the women who were willing to be respondents would have been among the more open and among those who had made a more positive adjustment. Thus, some factor other than mere marital disruption appears to influence these women. Perhaps that factor was related to the stigma perceived or the sense of not being able to talk to others about their experience.

Kazak and Marvin (1984) found a similar phenomenon with parents of handicapped children. They studied the differences in social networks between families with handicapped children and those without handicapped children, assuming that a handicapped child would add to the family and marital stress. The study found that the families with a handicapped child had a smaller, highly interconnected, family-dominated support system. These families relied on a few people for support. In

fact, family supports were larger, on the average, than were friendship supports. While this type of support structure is not deemed ideal as more pressure is then placed on those few in the support system, this smaller network appears to be preferred and suitable for the families with a handicapped child.

Both parents of handicapped children and wives of homosexuals appear to chose a small network for their support system. However, for these wives of homosexuals, family members were not the choice of people to constitute that support system.

Holroyd (1974) suggests that mothers of handicapped children are more sensitive to the degree to which their child fits into the community. This may also be true for these wives. Only for them, they are probably more sensitive to the degree that they, their spouse, and their own families fit into the community since homosexuality is an issue which parents find difficult to handle (Loomis, 1977; Silverstein, 1977). The small network size may be as a result of the wives' concern for how they fit in or relate to their community, combined with the pressure of not knowing how the family will respond.

Most models of social support recognize that the overall function of social support is to enhance the recipient's well-being (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). Through contact with and the companionship of others, the deleterious effects of isolation and loneliness can be mitigated. These women chose a smaller support system which resulted in social isolation. Schumaker and Brownell (1984) also suggested that while social interactions usually produce positive self-identities, they can sometimes result in negative self-identities. Scapegoating, labeling, stereotyping, and stigmatizing are all examples of how people can obtain a negative sense of self through social interactions.

Shinn, Lehman, and Wong (1984) discussed how stigmatizing events or conditions can reduce others' willingness to provide support. "For example, cancer, mental illness, and AIDS make many people uncomfortable interacting with the victims." In recent years, AIDS and homosexuality have been one of the current issues in the public eye. Perhaps the reason that parents of handicapped children and wives of homosexuals choose a small support network may not be a matter of choice as much as it is their perception, real or otherwise, of others' lack of comfort around them, their observation

of others' lack of comfort with the issues or with people from the stigmatized groups. One respondent stated that she did not talk to people about her husband's homosexual orientation because she perceived that they could not handle the issue. Also, she felt that those people would not be able to handle an issue about someone for whom she had cared very deeply and for whom she still cared.

Coping.

Prior coping strategies were reported by four of the respondents as not working this time. Somehow this experience was more difficult to deal with than others. One wife stated:

> I guess I've always tried to make the best of every situation...I guess they (past coping strategies) worked okay on the surface. Like in other situations it was sort of me against the elements. This time it was like something happening inside me or to me...

What they did in response to a stressful event before was not helpful this time. The struggle was more intrinsic than extrinsic. Past coping strategies simply did not apply to this situation.

For most of these respondents (N=8), existing resources were not adequate in this situation. This experience was qualitatively different from past experiences and as a result past coping resources and strategies were not adequate for this situation. During this stage, new coping strategies were sought and utilized for both this stage and further stages.

However, this was the point where the women realized that they had to use different coping stategies to handle this situation. Their past coping stategies had been aimed at maintaining the family system--those they had used in Stage Two. Now, they had to do something different. "I always believed whatever little things were wrong with our marriage, we could work at them. And this was the first time where I finally had to through it out the window."

One of the characteristics of the stress for these women was that they had no control over the situation. While they at first tended to blame themselves, they eventually acknowledged that they could not control their husbands' homosexual orientation and were not responsible for that orientation. This made the event outside of their control.

In their study on life events and stress and illness, Stern, McCants and Pettine (1982) found that uncontrollable life events were more strongly associated with stress and illness than were either controllable or total events. The pertinent differential for these women appeared to be that this life event was outside of their control, while the struggle was very personal for them. Their immediate reactions were coping on the basis that they had some control over the situation, whereas in reality they did not.

McCubbin and Patterson (1982) defined crisis as a continuous variable denoting the amount of disruptiveness, disorganization, or incapacitatedness in the family social system. Crisis is characterized by the family's inability to restore stability. Stress, in itself, does not necessarily signify a crisis. Rather, stress reaches crisis proportions when the family is unable to use existing resources and defines the situation so as to resist systemic change. In the present study, the spousal system was not capable of defining the situtation so as to resist systemic change. As mentioned before, only two couples were able to define the situation so as to resist

change. For those two couples, their communication appeared to have been the differentiating factor.

Family adaptive resources are defined as those already existing and those expanded by the family (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). For the women in this study, existing family resources were not utilized as either personal or couple support. Further, expanded resources were aimed at creating a new, more independent self--one respondent stated that she went back to work, another stated that she focused all her energies on her career, and still another stated that she worked on developing her personal and emotional strengths. New resources were aimed at developing themselves, not necessarily developing a couple relationship with their spouse or any other male.

McCubbin and Patterson (1982) stated that family coping efforts are aimed at (a) eliminating and/or avoiding stressors and strains; (b) managing the hardships of the situation; (c) maintaining the family system's integrity and morale; (d) acquiring and developing resources to meet demands; and (e) implementing structural changes in the family systems to accommodate the new demands. These have been applied to the responses of these women.

Attempts to eliminate or avoid the stressors were evident in the denial of the issue, the sense that this was really not happening, or that this was just a passing fantasy. Even though some men told their wives that they were having homosexual activity, they chose not to believe their husbands. Detachment was used to eliminate the stressors as well as manage the hardships. If the wife could simply detach from the reality of the issue, then the stress would be diminished temporarily. The maintenance of family system integrity was a concern for all of the women with children. Tied in with this was the implementing of structural changes to accommodate. Some of the changes were to allow the gay spouse to have contact with the gay lover, to invite the gay lover to dinner and to visit, to include the gay lover in family activities, or to allow the spouse to reside with the gay lover for a time to test the viability of that relationship. Acquiring new resources to meet the demands was restricted to professional counselling, writing in a journal and finding one person with whom to talk about their feelings. Resources did not include the family or a larger network of people.

McCubbin and Patterson (1982) also discussed pile-up factors as being influencial on coping. People can cope with a crisis adequately but then disintegrate when one more stressor ocurs. For these women this disintegration occurred as their stress level began to increase. They could cope with this situation and handle life's stressors until other stressors piled up. "Sometimes I'd be fine...When I didn't feel well about myself or when I was down I couldn't do it...I couldn't hack it. I'd just go to pieces." Pile-up factors of feeling depressed compounded the stress of coping with the disclosure.

Depression and self-esteem.

Half of the respondents reported having had low self-esteem during the relationship, especially closer to the disclosure. Feelings of being put down by their husbands were experienced. Coleman's (1985) research indicated that wives were dependent and suffered from low self-esteem at the point of disclosure. "There were times in our marriage when he would put me down or make me feel small...for a long time I took it without too much fighting back because maybe in a way I felt I deserved it."

During this stage when they were becoming more aware of their own feelings, some experienced a sense of loss of identity and confidence. "I lost a lot of confidence." "I was lost completely. My own identity, my own confidence, and he really had a lot of control over me....My self-respect and everything I felt for myself at the time was in his hands." "And when I left the marriage I began to realize how belittled I was."

Interestingly, the respondents reported that those feelings of low self-esteem diminished after the trauma of the disclosure had been experienced. Some women reported that after the disclosure and the separation, they had built themselves up to the point where they felt really good about themselves again. The depressive feelings diminished with time post-disclosure as they focused their efforts on building themselves and their careers.

> I felt that at the time I couldn't see anything positive in anything anymore.....then I started feeling more confident...I have moved up (career) and acquired more responsibility....from that time I started moving and I started going places and I started realizing that I am capable of

doing things.

Brown and Harris (1978) found that an intimate relationship with a husband or boyfriend protects women from depression following serious life events. Yet, intimate relationships with a mother, sister or friend do not appear to offer the same protection. However, post-disclosure, most of these women sought friends in whom to confide for an intimate relationship. In the two marriages which remained intact, both respondents reported good communication prior to the disclosure and even better communication after. Both of their husbands were extremely willing to talk about the issues any time these women perceived the need. Often, the husbands perceived their wives' need and would ask them if they wanted to talk. As well, in one of the marriages which dissolved, communication also increased post-disclosure. It appeared that the salient difference between the relationships which remained intact and those which disintegrated was the willingness of the husbands to communicate openly and freely.

Menaghan and Lieberman (1986) conducted a panel study over a four-year span looking at the changes in depression following divorce. This looked at divorced

and married people. The divorce group showed significantly more depression four years later than did the married group. Depression increased over time with the divorced group who did not re-marry. These results are not consistent with the wives in this study who showed a decrease in depression over time. Rather than depression increasing, feelings of building themselves up and increases in their self-esteem were evident. Perhaps wives of homosexuals realize the marital breakup was not their fault, while wives of heterosexuals may continue to blame themselves for the marital dissolution.

The only one.

Also, four of these respondents expressed a sense of isolation--a feeling of being alone, of being the only person going through this type of distress. The feeling that no one before them had experienced the same kind of pain. "I felt like I was, there was no one else. I was the only one around. I didn't have anybody to talk to." "I didn't know of anyone and I felt like I was kind of all alone."

They felt that no one could understand their pain nor understand what the experience was like for them. They also felt empathy for their husbands. This

empathy appeared to stem from the feeling that their husbands must have been experiencing similar pain--that pain of being the only one, and having no one to talk to who would understand.

Stages Two and Three were not discrete, unidirectional stages. Often the respondents would vacillate between the stages prior to resolving the issue. During this time, the respondents tended to reason through their own theory of the etiology of homosexuality and their control over the situation. These stages tended to proceed through several months with confusion, anger and crying being evident throughout.

But as stated previously, once these women went on to the stages of acceptance and detachment, they did not return to the accommodation stage. While there was a phenomenon of circling back to the stage of self-awareness, the swing-back was due to connectors which triggered memories. The phenomenon of circling back to Stage Three is discussed along with Stage Five.

Stage Four - Acceptance

Stage Four was acceptance where the respondents finally came to the realization that indeed they had no control over their husbands' homosexual orientation

and/or his engagement in homosexual activity. Initially, the respondents tended towards self-blame for their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. As they progressed through the stages, they tended to realize that they had no control and were, therefore, not to blame. For the most part, their husbands reassured their wives that they did not create, nor could they alter their personal homosexual orientation. This realization removed the self-blame and produced relief. Then, the respondents were free to establish their theory of the etiology of homosexuality.

Locus of control.

One of the immediate reactions for many (N=6) was self-blame--an "if only" reaction. They felt that if only they had tried harder, if only they had been a more attentive wife, if only they had cooperated with different sexual practices, if only they were more desirable, then perhaps their husbands would not have sought after homosexual relationships. "I thought all I needed to do was try harder." These women tended to react with an internal locus of control. Invariably, crying was an outlet for these women. "I cried a lot."

"I cried and cried and cried and I went around the house beating doors and walls." "I was crying."

During the 1960's, social-learning theory elaborated the concept of locus of control (Krech, et al., 1982). Individuals who generally attribute their success and failure to their own behavior (personal effort or ability) are said to have an internal locus of control (Gage & Berliner, 1984). Individuals who generally attribute their success and failure to luck or task difficulty are said to have an external locus of control. Pride and shame are maximized when achievement outcomes are ascribed internally and minimized when success or failure are ascribed to external causes (Gage & Berliner, 1984).

These women tended towards an internal locus of control as they initially blamed themselves for their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. They ascribed to themselves the control over the situation rather than to their husbands--who were external to them. What reduced their self-blame was their husbands' reassurance that they had no control over their husbands' homosexual orientation. "It (homosexuality) has nothing to do with me...I can't do anything about it."

Theory of homosexuality.

The majority of wives eventually believed that neither they nor their husband had any control over the husbands' homosexual orientation. Most of the wives (N=7) ascribed the homosexual orientation to biological etiology. "As to why they're homosexuals, their genes, something within them. It's their family life. I really don't underatnd why they're homosexuals but I've accepted them all."

Two wives believed that homosexuality is a sin and that their husbands chose to engage in their negative behavior. One wife believed that the origin was social learning--her husband's upbringing.

Some wives reported a sense of relief once they realized that their husbands' homosexual orientation was not in their control--it was not their fault. This relief came as they re-defined homosexuality as something outside of their control. "It (homosexuality) has nothing to do with me...I can't do anything about it." As stated previously, their decisions were that homosexuality was the result of either genes, sin, or social learning.

Stage Five - Detachment

The majority (N=9) of the wives progressed to Stage Five where they had detached themselves from this past experience. They preferred not to become part of any ongoing support groups. Many stated that talking to this researcher was difficult. Intitially, many had decided not to participate in the study. They did not want to discuss the issue any more, but eventually did agree to be a respondent. Many could not tell me why they had changed their minds. These wives tended to desire to forget that past experience and proceed with their lives. Instead of dwelling on the past experience, they pushed their energies into themselves, their careers, or their families. They tended to become independent, self-sufficient women. As a whole, they were not willing to commit to a marriage relationship.

Not free to talk.

Seven of the ten respondents stated that they did not feel free to talk to their friends and families about their husbands' homosexual orientation. "This is actually the first time that I've really talked much about it. I've avoided, totally avoided it." "I don't

think I've ever talked to anybody (about my husband's homosexual orientation and/or activity)."

While most did not report a perception of being stigmatized when the term stigma was used, they still were not free to discuss their feelings with their immediate social support systems and instead chose isolation.

> ...having said that I don't see any (stigma)...any real problems with it. You'd think I'd be able to talk about it quite naturally and calmly and what not to just about anybody. And I'm not. I know I'm in for a lot of explanations.

Many did not feel free to talk to their own family, i.e. parents, children about the disclosure. "My parents still don't know about it." One woman stated that her family was very accepting, but she still could not tell them.

> My family is very very open-minded... And how was I going to tell her(mother), this very happy person was leaving two weeks after she was married....Cause I haven't dealt with it myself...I don't want anybody to have to deal with it. How could they deal with it if I couldn't deal with it?

This phenomenon of refraining from disclosing to others may have been a reflection of what Gochros' study indicated. Gochros (1985) found that once the disclosure occurred, the stigma attached to the bisexual husband decreased, but then tended to be transferred to the wife. Wives were stigmatized because they loved and lived with bisexual men. The wives were stigmatized by association.

Perhaps believing that one is being stigmatized is too difficult to handle and may produce a negative sense of self. Therefore, these women may simply have decided not to place themselves in the situation in which they could discover whether there would be any stigma attached to them. Every woman was extremely careful in her selection of whom she chose to talk about her feelings--rarely was that person a family member or a close family friend.

Stigma.

Goffman (1963) defined stigma as information about an individual's more or less abiding characteristics which necessitates management in order to avoid discrediting the individual. The key phrase here is "information management". Once disclosure occurs, the husband, the wife, and the children must learn to

manage that discrediting information about a member of their family, even if separation results. Some gay men and women have lost their jobs and many more have been harassed in their workplace due to stigma (Bell & Weinberg, 1978). Any harassment experienced by the husband would influence the marital relationship.

Stigma conveys information about an individual which influences other people's perception of that individual's social and personal identity as well as the individual's personal perception of his or her personal and social identity. The process is reflexive and interactive.

The amount of stigma perceived varies according to the definition of homosexuality adhered to by the wife. The definition of homosexuality has shifted through the years from sin to perversion, to neurosis, to variation, and to alternate lifestyle. The degree of stigma perceived and felt, and the definition of homosexuality, both vary according to the degree of religious affiliation (Wolff, 1985) and local acceptance of the gay lifestyle by residents (Bell & Weinberg, 1978). For example, San Francisco is termed a "good scene" for gays (Bell & Weinberg, 1978), where gays are harassed much less than they are in other

parts of the United States. Less perceived stigma would result where there is less harassment.

Married homosexual males tend to react to the perception of stigma rather than the reality. Branton (Master's Thesis, 1987) studied the relationship between marital status and psychological adjustment in the married homosexual male. His study revealed that those homosexual males who anticipated discrimination from the wider society attempted most to conform to a heterosexual life style. Anticipated, not necessarily experienced, discrimination appeared to be a salient factor persuading homosexual men to attempt to conform to a heterosexual life style.

Among the many aspects of stigma, Goffman (1963) discusses the ease of the acceptability of those who are aware of the stigma and the influence of the stigma on intimate relationships. Both of these aspects of stigma relate to spousal relationships.

Goffman (1963) states that in some cases it is much easier to accept the stigmatized individual when you have less contact with him or her--thus less shared contact with the stigma. Often it is the individual's intimates, such as spouses and family, from whom the stigmatized person wishes to conceal the stigma. The

more the shared contact, the greater the risk of exposure of the stigmatizing information. While the stigmatized person may be able to cope with the concealment in his or her casual relationships, concealment in intimate relationships becomes more problematic. Either the person will admit the stigmatizing information or feel guilty for not doing so (Goffman, 1963).

Implications are clear for homosexuals who are living a double life--where the wives are unaware of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity but the gay world is knowledgeable of their homosexual involvement. Spousal relationships involve a high degree of intimacy. If the husband is concealing his homosexual activity and/or orientation from his wife, he is probably feeling considerable guilt for the deception. One article stated: "The married man guards his secret from the one to whom he is most intimately bound; this secret thus is fraught with meaning on a moral and personal level" (Brownfain, 1985). His negative feelings about the deception would infiltrate the spousal relationship.

Also, once the disclosure has been made, the wife may have some reactions to his deception as well.

Gochros (1985) found that honesty on the part of the husband was associated with positive relational outcomes post-disclosure. Positive relational outcomes may have been maintaining the marital relationship or merely maintaining a good friendship relationship. However, a betrayal of trust was associated with negative relational outcomes.

In order to maintain this deception in intimate relationships, or in any relationship, the stigmatized person is pressured to develop what Goffman calls "in-deeper-ism". The person must elaborate one lie after another in order to prevent disclosure of the stigmatizing behavior. Many married homosexuals develop this process (Divorced Gay Male, personal communication, November, 1986) in order to conceal their homosexual activity from their wives. Once the disclosure occurs, she may respond to the deception as well as stigmatization and other aspects of her definition of the situation.

Secondary victimization.

Brickman, Rabinowitz, Karuza, Coates, Cohn, and Kidder (1982) discussed the process of "secondary victimization" in which victims are victimized once again by awkward or ineffective efforts to help them.

Four of the women reported feeling that they had been victimized or used by their husbands to create a show of normalcy. Some of the women stated that they did not discuss the issue with their family or friends because they felt they had made a poor choice and would be judged as having made a poor choice. For these women, there would have been the perception of secondary victimization--that they would have been victimized again by their support group because of their choice. That perception of secondary victimization may have been the impetus for seeking non-family to talk with and choosing the smaller social network of which the consequence was social isolation.

The issue of not talking to family and friends because they felt they would be admitting to having made a poor choice confirms Coleman's (1985) research. Coleman found that wives were more reluctant to seek social supports than were their bisexual husbands. His suggestion was that these women perceived that seeking out supports would result in admittance of their failure in relationships with men.

Croog (1970) reviewed literature which shows that the family can serve as a source of stress due to role or value conflicts. Most of the respondents indicated

that they felt that their husbands' families would not understand or accept their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. Most of the respondents felt that if their husbands' families were to be told, then their husband was responsible for this. The value conflicts between the homosexual spouse and both spouses' families could serve as a source of stress in family interaction, resulting in isolation.

Lack of Remarriage.

Another pattern was that of a lack of remarriage by these women. A study on trends in marriage and divorce indicated that of those women age 20 to 54 years who divorce for the first time, 64.3 % will remarry (Norton & Moorman, 1987). Also, for women age 15 to 74 years, the average interval between first divorce and remarriage was 2.3 years. For these women, the average length of time from the disclosure and separation to the time of the interview was 7.3 years. These women, on average, have been single for at least seven years and none has remarried.

One woman stated: "I will never, never, never, never remarry." She has a relationship with another male, but she will not remarry. Other women, also, are in relationships, but do not wish to remarry.

> I guess that whole idea... about fidelity and commitment I threw out those rules....I treat them (men) all as friends first and we have a good time. And if a good time involves going to bed together well, fine, but that doesn't mean commitment and that doesn't mean fidelity.

Several of the respondents described their experience as being similar to the stages of grief. "I went through a period of mourning. I mean, actual mourning. Like the grief process." One respondent stated that divorce is like a death except that the husband is still around and there are no societal conventions to help you with the grief process. "Divorce is like a death and yet there are no societal ways of helping us to get through it...there's the funeral and the people come...there's support there, um and there wasn't any support...emotional support."

Kessler (Kaslow, 1984) delineated a model of the stages of the divorce process as follows:

1. <u>Disillusionment</u> with feelings of dissatisfaction, alienation, anxiety, and disbelief.
2. <u>Erosion</u> with feelings of despair, anguish, shock, emptiness, anger, inadequacy, loss, and low self-esteem.

3. Detachment with accompanying feelings of depression, detachment, anger, hopelessness.

4. Physical separation with fury, confusion, relief, sadness and vindictiveness.

5. Mourning with feelings of numbness, concern for children, and uncertainty.

6. The finalization of the divorce and integrating a new life.

7. Completion of the psychic divorce and seeking a new love object.

For these women, Kessler's Stage Five of mourning with feelings of numbness, concern for children, and uncertainty most adequately fits with the Second Stage of accommodation. Perhaps for these women a sense of death of the relationship or their idea of what they thought the relationship was based on is the most prominent response or feeling. Kubler-Ross's (1969) first stage of grief is denial. Denial pre- and post-disclosure was part of the experience for these women.

Stages One through Four of Kessler's model were experienced in Stage Three of self-awareness for these women. It appears that while in a heterosexual divorce situation, these feelings tend to be time specific,

whereas in the case of homosexual disclosure, the feelings are experienced simultaneously.

On the whole, these respondents went immediately to Stage Five of mourning and then progressed to a combination of Stages One through Four with feelings of anger, confusion, hurt, shock, disbelief, inadequacy. They commenced Stage Six by integrating a new life for themselves while dealing with Stage One of disillusionment, in that they are not remarrying. None of these women who separated and divorced have progressed to Stage Seven.

Basically, the period of disillusionment did not exist for these women pre-disclosure. Most of them stated that their marriage prior to the disclosure was relatively happy. For most of them, the disclosure was sudden and they did not deal with the disenchantment phase with their partner prior to disclosure.

What can be stated about the experience of divorce for these women is that wives of homosexuals do not conform to the general population in that they do not remarry. Something about the disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity makes their experience different.

Build self and career.

Some of the women shifted their energies from the relationship to career advancemnt or re-entering the labour market. For some, going back to work was a contingency plan so they could be financially self-sufficient in the event the marriage disolved. Others continued their post-secondary education or accepted a promotion and focused their energies on advancing their careers. "I am just so obsessed with working on myself--making my life better and going back to school and finding what I really am capable of doing."

Fear of new relationships.

Many expressed a resistance to committing to another relationship--a sense of not wanting to be hurt again. This fear generalized to friendships, in that the women would not be as willing to make new friends or talk with old friends. This once more increased their isolation. "It took me a long time to even go out and make my own friends, again, trust people, want to talk to people." "...it's hard to trust again...to take that chance...it's too much of a risk...I want it and yet I'm scared."

Connectors.

The model indicates a looping back from Stage Five of detachment to Stage Three of self-awareness of own feelings. For many, the anger and hurt emerged when specific connectors would remind them of the past. Such connectors were driving past camp or picnic sites where they had enjoys themselves as a family. "...the darndest things would trigger a crying jag. Memories...our picnics and our camping." Another powerful connector appeared to be when the spouse would have a gay lover. "I wouldn't be angry for a long time. Then all of a sudden it would heat and I would be very angry....when I first found out that (he) was having a relationship with different guys." "I found it very difficult--for instance, I met his subsequent lover."

This model represented how the sample tended to progress in their feelings, reactions and beliefs to the disclosure of their husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity. While individual differences created an extremely variable time differential for working through these stages, all of the stages emerged. Also, the husbands' empathy and communication appeared to influence the time factor.

Other Issues

Two other issues emerged with the interviews. One was the advice against trying to make a marriage work with a bi-sexual spouse. The other was the respndents feelings on AIDS.

"Don't try".

The overall sentiment expressed by the respondents was that they advised other women against trying being married to a homosexual spouse. One of the women who remained married stated:

> No, I just wouldn't suggest anybody try it (being married to a homosexual spouse). I guess it makes me mad that society makes so many of these guys marry when they should never have married. But like, I have seen so many ...the hell the wives go through... As I said I wouldn't recommend it to anybody.... But in our case, it works.

AIDS.

Each respondent was asked if AIDS had been an issue for them. One reported that she had been concerned about determining whether or not she had been

exposed. A few others stated that they had procured information, but had no real concerns. One stated that she had read all of the media information and felt that the media was exploiting the issue and creating more of a scare than was realistic. For the majority, AIDS did not present a problem.

Previously, the medical field had been stating that women need not fear AIDS transmission from their husbands because AIDS was not bi-directional, i.e. AIDS could be spread from male to male via anal or oral intercourse, but not through vaginal intercourse. However, more recent research has indicated a 50% transmission rate of AIDS from a bisexual spouse to the wife (Fischl, et al., 1987). Oral sex and the lack of barrier contraceptive use were associated with the seroconversion from husband to wife. Therefore, wives of bisexual and homosexual spouses should fear the transmission of AIDS to them.

Carl (1986) studied the effects of AIDS on gay couples and found that gay males are tending towards a coupled, semi-exclusive lifestyle in order to combat the transmission of AIDS. Martin (1987) studied the impact of AIDS on gay male sexual behavior patterns in New York City. The sample of 745 gay males reported

that their sexual activity had declined by 78 per cent since hearing about AIDS. The frequency of sexual episodes involving the exchange of body fluids and mucous membrane contact declined by 70 per cent, and condom use during anal intercourse increased from 1.5 to 20 per cent.

While the gay male population is concerned about AIDS transmission, the wives of gays are not. What the reasons are for this lack of concern is difficult to ascertain. Perhaps the issue of AIDS is even more difficult for these women to cope with then the discovery that their husband is homosexual that they cannot cope with both issues. As one woman stated, when she thought about the whole issue of her husband being gay, she could not resolve that he was gay and they were married so she just stopped thinking. Perhaps, more women simply stopped thinking about the issues and AIDS was beyond where they were willing to think.

Summary

All of these women experienced a crisis situation in that their past coping strategies and coping resources were not helpful in this situation. The spousal system tended not to be capable of defining the

situation so as to resist systemic change. Further, expanded resources tended to be aimed at creating a new, more independent self.

The overall response from these women was to withdraw back from their past resources and support systems and then experience a sense of isolation. Several things contributed to that sense of isolation including seeking one confidant and seeking new resources.

Usually, confidants were not members of the family or a close family friend, but rather were people who were more removed from the situation. Respondents tended not to use existing family resources as personal or couple support. Respondents tended to not feel free to talk to their friends and family about their husbands' homosexual orientation.

Respondents tended to recognize clues post-disclosure which would have indicated a homosexual orientation if they had taken those clues seriously prior to the disclosure. The disclosure tended to be a sudden event as a rule.

Most women reported having a good marriage relationship prior to the disclosure, although some stress and tension was perceived in the marital

relationship in the last few months prior to the disclosure. Respondents who had children tended to be concerned about maintaining the family for the sake of the children.

Most women reported experiencing a sense of empathy for their spouses. Many attempted to accommodate to their husbands' needs by befriend the gay lover and suggesting that the spouse move in and reside with the gay lover to discover if the relationship would work.

Initially, these women tended to react with self-blame--an "if only" reaction. Most of them experienced a delayed reaction to anger and hurt. When they finally did allow their anger to emerge, some reported intensely angry feelings. A sense of detachment was reported by most of the women.

Feelings of low self-esteem during the relationship were experienced by the women, especially closer to the time of disclosure. These same women tended to report that those feelings of low self-esteem diminished after the trauma of the disclosure had been experienced.

Sexual activity tended to cease immediately post-disclosure. The only exception was where the wives

reported good communication, both verbal and sexual, prior to disclosure. They also reported that verbal communication was even better post-disclosure.

All of the women eventually believed that they had no control over their husbands' homosexual orientation. Most also believed that their husbands had no control over their sexual orientation. They tended towards a biological etiology of homosexuality.

CHAPTER SIX

Comparison with Gochros (1985)

This research was designed to replicate sections of Gochros' (1985) study on wives of bisexuals. The main differences between Gochros' study and this study are the area of the country where the respondents resided and methodology.

Gochros' sample was obtained from Honolulu, Portland, San Francisco, and New York. Bell and Wienberg (1978) described San Francisco in particular as a "good scene" for gays, an area where gays are more accepted. The sample for this study was drawn from a conservative area in Canada--Alberta. Presumably, straight women and gay men would respond differently, and perhaps women would feel more stigmatized in the different cultural milieu.

Gochros used a combination of taped, semi-structured interviews supplemented by a structured questionnaire and four standardized scales. This study used taped, semi-structured interviews.

Most of the areas that were replicated were verified by the present research. The similarities and differences between findings shall be discussed.

Similarities Between Gochros and Present Study

	Gochros	Present
1.) Median age in years-	39	34.1
2.) Age range in years-	23 to 59	22 to 52

3.) Wide range of socio-economic, religious, educational, and cultural backgrounds.

4.) Profile: a highly educated, assertive, self-confident and socially skilled woman who had enjoyed a better-than-average marriage for many years.

5.) A crisis situation--new resources and coping skills required.

6.) Disclosure--gradual process of increasing awareness with a precipitating event.

7.) Personal Variables

a.) Dramatic loss of self-esteem and identity.

b.) Feelings of rejection, betrayal, anger, being used, confusion and hurt

c.) Sexually naive at the time of marriage--first relationship

d.) Cognitive blank--information meant nothing

e.) Strong sense of isolation.

f.) Lack of an available, understanding support system

g.) The only one

h.) Lost faith in their own judgement

8.) Husbands' degree of empathy, concern for his wife and his willingness to communicate associated with maintainence of the marital relationship.

Differences Between Gochros and Present Study

Most of the findings were similar. One main difference was evident--relational outcomes. Another difference was reporting stigma.

Relational outcomes.

Positive and negative disclosures were discussed in Gochros' study as having relationship factors associated with them. Positive disclosures were associated with an increased communication, a reaffirmation of love, and an improvement in the sexual relationship. Negative disclosures were associated with a deterioration in the marital relationship. Also, feelings of being used and of being were associated with a negative disclosure in Gochros study. In Gochros' study a sense of breech of trust was associated more with a negative outcome.

However, this study did not verify such a clear delineation of responses. In this study all of the negative relational factors and most of the positive relational factors (e.g. communication) were associated with nearly all of the respondents, regardless of relational outcome. Perhaps, the smaller sample size reduced the possibility of clear separate reactions.

Stigma.

In Gochros' study, respondents reported feeling stigmatized. Their isolation increased their sense of stigma, which in turn increased their tendency to isolate themselves. "Almost all wives cited a lack of a knowledgeable support system and information as increasing their sense of stigma and isolation. (Gochros, 1985, p.109)"

While women in this study reported a strong sense of isolation, they stated that they did not feel stigmatized. Their reactions indicated perceived stigma in that they were not free to talk to other people, but these women did not label that response as a result of feeling any stigma. The fact that women in Alberta are not reporting any stigma is interesting in view of the fact that Alberta is more culturally conservative than when Gochros' sample was taken.

AIDS

Many of the findings from this research verify the results of Gochros' study. The one issue which was additional here was that of AIDS. The sample for Gochros' study was gathered in 1982, prior to the AIDS scare. Presumably, women in a 1988 sample should have been more aware of the AIDS issue and concerned about their own health. That assumption did not hold true. As a whole, this sample was not concerned about the contraction of AIDS from their spouses.

Summary

For the most part, the present study has provided support for Gochros' findings. These results will contribute to the body of knowledge provided by Gochros about wives of homosexuals. This study, unlike Gochros' study, investigated the issue of AIDS and how AIDS has impacted these wives.

What is interesting is that the findings of both studies are similar, even though the cultural milieu is at variance. Similar results in a different area where gays are not accepted as easily, strengthens the credibility of the findings.

However, this research has extended beyond Gochros' study and integrated the body of knowledge on

wives of homosexuals into a stage model of response to disclosure. The findings of wives responses were drawn together in a stage model which indicated disclosure as a process. This study, which replicated Gochros' study, confirmed Gochros' results and further integrated those results in a theory-building process.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion and Conclusions

The experience of a husband's disclosure of his homosexual orientation and/or activity appears to be a crisis for these respondents. This is evidenced by the lack of functioning of old support systems and the inappropriateness of former resources for these women in this situation. Something in this situation effects their process of coping and results in new coping choices being made by these women.

Choices

One of the choices these women make is to confide in only one or two people who, in general, are not family or friends of both spouses. This course of action results in their isolation from former sources of support. Several factors may be operational here.

While these women have stated that they do not feel any stigma, most of them have also stated that they do not feel that they can discuss this with their family or friends for the follwing reasons: they would not understand, they would not be able to handle the issue, or they would think less of the respondent because the respondent has made such a poor choice. In

each case, the respondent is managing information, which denotes stigma.

Perhaps perceived stigma or the respondents' perception that family and friends would think less of them prompts women not to confide in them. Again, perceived stigma may be more influential in that decision than actual experienced stigma (Branton, 1987). That perception of stigma from their family and friends may have had an influence on the choice of person in whom these women have confided.

One respondent had confided in a family member. However, that particular family member approached that respondent and offered support and understanding. Also, that family member did not have negative attitudes towards homosexuals in general and had previously suspected that her sister's husband was homosexual. For most women, their families have not approached them to offer support. Some respondents have eventually informed their families, but their families have not initiated discussions of the husbands' homosexual orientation and/or activity.

Another possibility is the wives' perception that other people would not be able to handle the issue of homosexuality. Since these women initially experienced

difficulty with the issue themselves, they may assume that others would react in the same manner. These women may be expending considerable energy on dealing with their own pain and hurt, so that to have to deal with the expected negative attitudes of others may be too much to cope with. Therefore, they may be choosing conservation of energy rather than isolation. However, isolation becomes the consequence of the choice to pull back and not handle other's reactions.

Also, women may be very unsure and ambivalent about their own personal feelings and attitudes about homosexuality in the beginning stage post-disclosure. At times they felt a great deal of hurt and pain, rejection, abandonment, and confusion mixed with feelings of caring and empathy for their spouses. Since their feelings may vacillate greatly, they may be unsure as to how others will react to the issue. This insecurity may result in an unwillingness to take the risk of disclosing their feelings to others. Once more the end result may be isolation, although the motivation was self-preservation.

Whether motivated by perception of stigma, or energy conservation, or personal ambivalence, these women made some choices early post-disclosure which

resulted in personal isolation from former support systems. Further research is necessary to probe more fully the rationale for that choice.

Homosexual Extra-marital Relationship

The most significant difference between women whose husbands disclosed an extra-marital heterosexual relationship and these wives is that their husbands are sexually interested in and attracted to other men, not other women. Some wives have stated that they felt that there was nothing they could do to alter the situation since there was no basis for competition. They feel that their husbands' attraction to other men is not due to a lack on their part of being feminine or attractive. Their husbands simply are attracted to men rather than women. There is nothing that the wives can do to alter that attraction. However, if their husbands had been attracted to other women, they would have perceived that as a slight to their femininity.

Summary

The model indicates that wives tend to eventually reach Stage Five where they prefer not to discuss the past issues of a homosexual spouse. They prefer to go on with their lives and detach themselves from their past. The process of detachment from their past

results in an isolation from a part of them which was very real, albeit painful.

Much of Gochros' (1985) study was verified in this research. Still further research is necessary with larger samples in order to determine whether the experience delineated in this study fits for the larger population of wives of homosexuals. Since this sample was relatively small, generalizability is not possible. A larger sample would provide that ability.

What is lacking in both studies is a clear picture of what the process of disclosure and reacting is like in the present for these women. All of the data gathered have been retrospective data. While retrospective data are valuable for description, a more valuable, if perhaps idealistic, gleaning of data would be to talk with wives during the different stages of the disclosure event.

Once again, some factor appears to create a unique situation when women discover that their husbands have a homosexual orientation or have engaged in homosexual activity. Their experience of disclosure and subsequent marital disruption does not fit with the process of marital disruption from a heterosexual relationship. Perhaps, with time and a greater

acceptance of homosexuality and homosexuals by our society, more women will be willing to discuss their experience.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Directions for Further Research

Future research should more fully investigate the process of the wife reacting to the disclosure of her husband's homosexual orientation and/or activity and address the limitations of this study. This study had three limitations: retrospective data, small sample size, and direct questioning of stigma. A longitudinal study design is also discussed as a possible answer to the issue of retrospective data.

Retrospective Data

As previously stated, while retrospective data do contribute to the knowledge base of the experience, there are limitations. Intervening life events alter people's recall of events and feelings over time. Often, those events and feelings are perceived as more difficult or are idealized with a time lapse. The ideal would be to interview women immediately post-disclosure. However, access to respondents during that time frame appears to be problematic in that their personal pain and hurt is so intense that they do not wish to discuss the issues with many people. A solution may be to have an informant in the bisexual community or who would have connections in the bisexual

community to act as the liaison in establishing the necessary trust relationship.

Longitudinal Design

The third area of concern in further research is the used of a longitudinal or interrupted time-series research design. In this research design, the same group is tested or interviewed on several occasions over time. The virtue of a time-series design is that you can examine the trends in the data before the treatment or event, at the time of intervention or event, and post-event (Kidder & Judd, 1986). Since these women appear to progress through a process and the disclosure itself appears to be a process, the ideal research technique for investigating those processes would be several interviews over an extended period of time. This procedure should provide a more comprehensive understanding of what the disclosure is like for women.

Sample Size

Based on these findings and those of Gochros, a quantitative survey can be designed to verify the findings of this research. However, a quantitative study would necessitate a larger sample size for generalizability. Once more the problematic issue is

the availablity of research respondents. Again, an informant or previous respondents who would act as informants may be the key to access a larger population base.

Stigma

In this study, stigma was directly addressed since Gochros' study indicated that women were feeling stigmatized and isolated. However, these respondents stated that they did not feel stigmatized, but they also stated that they were not free to talk to other people. Stigma has a strong negative connotation and is not deemed socially acceptable. Therefore, stigma should be handled in a more indirect manner.

Both this study and Gochros' study indicate that the disclosure of a woman's husband's homosexual orientation and/or activity is a painful experience. Further researchers will have to consider the wives' subjective level of coping, pain and hurt as they probe this phenomenon more fully. However, these studies do indicate that the wives' experience is unique. Further investigation is warranted on the basis of that uniqueness coupled with a lack of extensive research in the area.

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APPENDIX 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Post-disclosure of your husband's homosexual activity:

How did you and your spouse meet and tell me about your relationship pre-disclosure.

1.-What was it like for you?

2.-How did you feel?

3.-How did you react?

4.-What did you do?

5.-What did you think?

6.-What did you find helpful, least helful?

7.-Who was most helpful; least helpful?

8.-Did things change at home?

9.-Did things change with your family?

10.-Did things change with your friends?

11.-Did anything aggravate the situation?

12.-How did you find out?

13.-How do you feel about homosexuality and/or homosexuals?

14.-Are there other issues which were important to you? If so, what?

15. Stigma

16. AIDS

APPENDIX 2

INFORMED CONSENT

Other studies have examined the reactions of women to life events such as the birth of a child, the death of a spouse, or a promotion to a new position. This research will focus on wives after they discover that their husband's have engaged in homosexual activity. Previous research on wives of bisexuals has focused on the husbands and has been drawn from United States samples. Hopefully, this study will provide a better understanding of what the experience is like for Canadian women.

The study consists of interviews with you at your convienience, at a mutually agreed upon location which provides privacy and confidentiality. Each interview will take approximately one to two hours during which your reactions to the disclosure of your husband's homosexual activity will be discussed. Should there be any questions which you would prefer not to answer, please feel free to say so. Should you prefer at any time during the interview to end the discussion, you are free to do so as well. With your permission, the interviews will be audio taped.

All information will be strictly confidential. Your file will contain your first name only and be designated with a code number for data collection and analysis. Names, phone numbers, addresses and audio tapes will be kept in a locked container until after the research has been finished, and then destroyed.

While this study may not benefit you directly, your responses will indicate to health care professionals what women are experiencing post-disclosure and how to best provide counselling and information for them. Should you wish, a copy of the results can be mailed to you after the study has been completed.

I am conducting this study as a partial requirement for a Masters in Science degree from the Department of Family Studies at the University of Alberta. Should you have any questions concerning the research or myself, please feel free to contact my advisor, Dr. Brenda Munro.

Thank you for your time.

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CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Respondent's Name

_____

Respondent's Signature_____

Date_____

Researcher's Signature_____

APPENDIX 3

Demographic Sheet

1. First Name _____ ID #_____
Address _____ Phone #_____
_____
_____

2. Age at time of disclosure:
Self _____ Homosexual spouse:_____

3. Highest level of education:

	Self	Spouse
High School	_____	_____
Post-Secondary	_____	_____
Occupation	_____	_____

4. Residence: Child:Self- Urban: _____
Rural: _____
Residence: Now:Spouse- Urban: _____
Rural: _____

5. Number of years married to homosexual spouse:_
_____

6. Number of children from marriage: 0 ____ 1 ____
2 ____ 3 ____
4 ____ 5 ____
6 ____ 7 + ____

7. Present Marital Status:
Married (to homosexual spouse) _____
Separated _____
Divorced _____
Re-married _____

8. Length of time post-disclosure: _____

9. Are you presently living with your homosexual spouse?
Yes ___ No __

10. What was your yearly income for you and your homosexual spouse pre-disclosure:

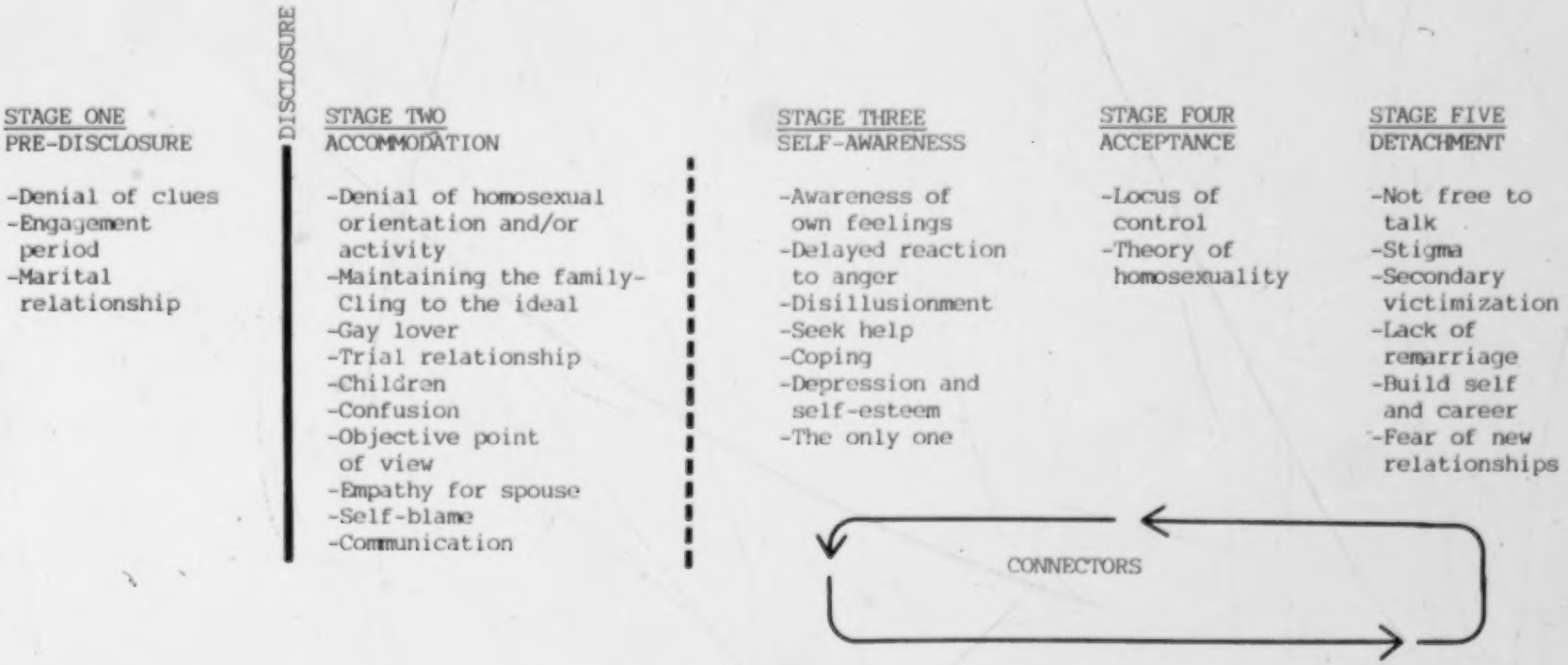
Under $10,000 annually	_____
$11,000 - $20,000	_____
$21,000 - $30,000	_____
$31,000 - $40,000	_____
$41,000 - $50,000	_____
$51,000 - plus	_____

11. What was your religious affiliation of your family when you where a child:

	Self	Spouse
Protestant	_____	_____
Protestant-Evangelical	_____	_____
Catholic	_____	_____
Jewish	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____
None	_____	_____

12. What was your religious affiliation of yourself and your spouse during the marriage:

	Self	Spouse
Protestant	_____	_____
Protestant-Evangelical	_____	_____
Catholic	_____	_____
Jewish	_____	_____
Other_____	_____	_____
None	_____	_____

Appendix 4

Stage Model of Wives' Responses to Disclosure of Their Husbands' Homosexual Orientation and/or Activity